SEAISIAND BOYS



WILLIAM PERRY BROWN

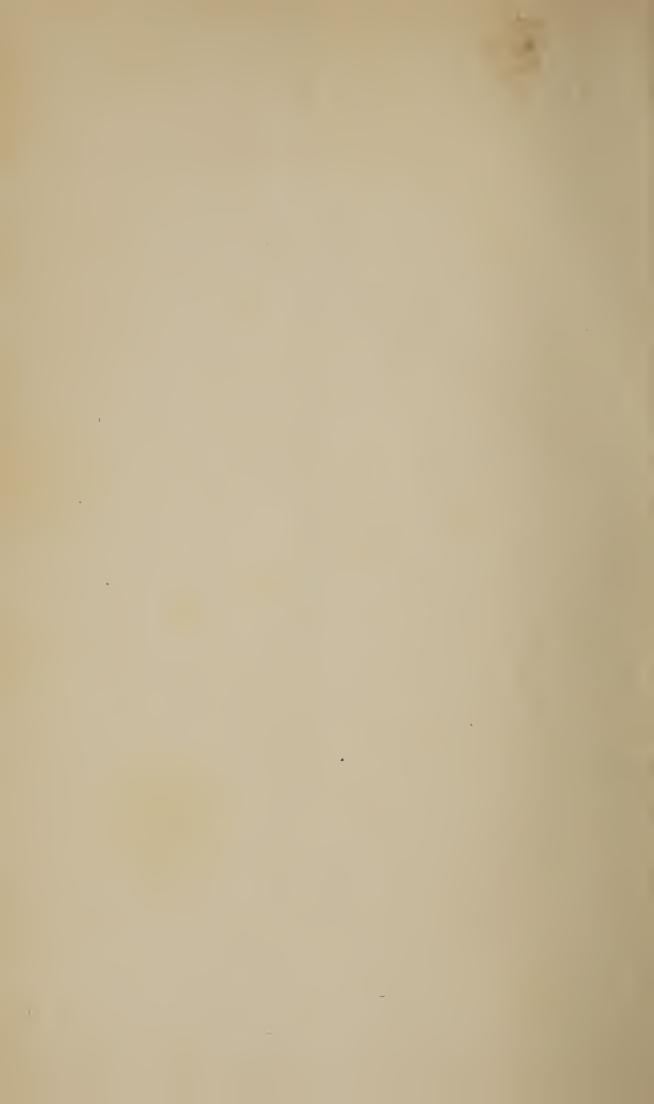


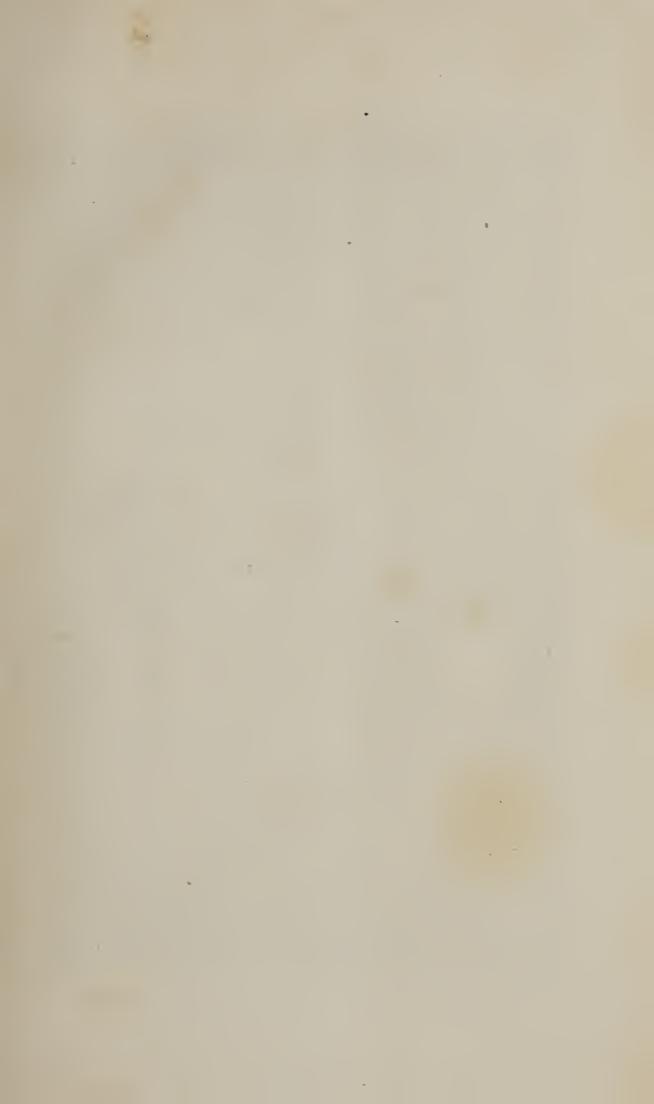
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Oid you wish to ask anything more, Jake?" (Page 20)



SEA ISLAND BOYS

DEC 17 1998.

..BY...

William Perry Brown

AUTHOR OF

"Ralph Granger's Fortune," "Florida Lads,"

"For King or Congress," "Vance Sevier," Etc.

ILLUSTRATED

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CHAPTER I.

THE BIRD HUNTER.

Waccamaw Island was shaped a good deal like one of the turkey oak leaves that, in the fall of the year, covered its backbone of a ridge, on which the wire-grass grew thin and scattering. There was a broad base of high ground, crowned with long-leafed pines, and also undersprinkled with these same small oaks, that branched off into three marshy prongs, where the forest dwindled into red-stemmed clumps of saw-palmetto. These in turn debouched upon, without entering, a region of waving marsh, where the tall saw-grass rippled into blue and green undulations, as the ocean breeze came whipping over the surface of Waccamaw Sound.

East and West Cuts separated Waccamaw from the larger domains of Edisto and Johns Islands. These last were, after all, only islands, too, but of regal dimensions, embracing a score or more of large plantations, while the small islet between was scarcely equal to a hundred-acre farm.

Two miles to the southeastward one caught a narrow gleam of the heaving Atlantic, through the estuary that diagonally sliced the long strip of ocean beach into two long divisions, known as Loon and Mullet Beaches. Here were sundry summer cottages of the more inland planters, fronting the surge-beaten sands of the shore. Beyond the inlet and the red buoys marking the outer bar was the black-sided lightship, with her dismal fog syren and her blinking white-and-red light at night.

On Johns Island was an old-fashioned, rusty-looking residence, that peered through the pines at Waccamaw in a stately sort of way, bearing itself to the water front with an air of battered yet unruffled respectability. Neglected gar-

dens, laid off in stilted, rectangular sections, lay on one side, and on the other were strung rows of stables, negro cabins and other outbuildings.

What had once been a well-kept avenue now straggled in an unkempt sort of way through half a mile of pine woods to the broader road that led to the Charleston steamboat landing. On either side and beyond stretched hundreds of acres of corn and cotton-fields, now only cultivated in spots.

The lower rice-fields were little better than mud-holes, and the miles of irrigating ditches and drains were mostly filled up, or used here and there, where their condition and the state of the land still admitted of the necessary flooding and withdrawal of water.

A long point on Edisto, a mile or so from the old mansion on Johns, was belching forth a cloud of smoke from a tall chimney that rose out of a cluster of wooden buildings at the edge of the West Cut. This was Mr. Ehrich's phosphate factory, and out in Waccamaw Sound and

up and down the lagoon, west of the islands, his dredge-boats were digging up the nodules of bone and rock that have rebuilt so many Sea Island fortunes since the loss of slave property at the time of the Civil War.

Not far from the Ehrich Works was the Ehrich residence, pleasantly situated near the shore of the West Cut, and nearly opposite the ancient house we have alluded to, that had been known to several generations as Roanoak Hall, the ancestral seat of the much reduced Roanoak family.

The Ehrich house was a modern-built villa, resplendent in paint and ginger-bread filigree, with every modern convenience, while the well-kept grounds and trim boathouse and wharf added an air of elegant precision to the water front, regardless of the half-rotten piling and dingy dug-out canoes that marked the marine accompaniments of the old Hall on the other side of Waccamaw Island, opposite.

A young man—a very young man—noticed the startling contrast thus epitomized from his

station on the black-jack ridge of the island, and smiled to himself in a bitter way. His clothing was coarse and well-worn, and he fanned himself with a yellow hat, home-made, of palmetto leaves.

Even his gun was an ancient muzzle-loader, though the barrels were as thin as paper, and of the style in vogue before breech-loaders and choke-boring became the fashion in fine fowling pieces.

The only really up-to-date things about his person and equipment were his own fresh, keen, intelligent features and a liver-and-white pointer that had seated itself beside its master on a fire-scarred log of heart-pine. From their position, both residences could be partially seen, one on either hand, through the fringe of pines and live-oaks bordering the narrow marsh that lined the banks of the two cuts or channels.

Near the Ehrich pier, a low, wall-sided yacht swung airily at her moorings, with a stern-line attached to the wharf. She was cat-rigged, with an abnormally long boom and a tapering mast,

both of which appeared disproportionally large as compared with the size of the clinker-built hull.

"I'll bet Jake Ehrich carries a reef in that mainsail, whenever he catches himself out alone in that craft," remarked the youth, in a semi-audible reverie. "He used to be a regular Miss Nancy at school, though that might have resulted because we old-family boys snubbed him so. It would have been more sensible for his father to have sent him to the city high school. But since the family got control of our Bugle Point plantation, they want to be upper crusts themselves. Well, why shouldn't they?"

He again contrasted Roanoak Hall and its almost squalid surroundings with the park-like demesne of its wealthier neighbor. Then he uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"If it was not for father and Aunt Europa, I would cut the whole business, go to the city, and hustle for a live job there. What does blue blood amount to now, without money to back its pretensions? Pity the Ehrichs and us could not

make a sort of trade. We want money, and they want blood—family position. If it was left to me, I would say amen in a hurry. But imagine the horror of the other Roanoaks at such a debasing proposal."

He laughed merrily at his impossible conceit, then paused suddenly, as his dog rose slowly and walked to the farther end of the log, appearing to stiffen into a keen attitude of attention as it went.

"Hey, Don! What is it—rabbit?"

The pointer sprang from the log, and moved crouchingly through the wire-grass toward a rail fence that divided the island lengthwise.

"Look here, Don," said the boy. "We mustn't trespass on our enemies' land. That is the Ehrich side of the old Waccamaw."

When about a dozen yards from the fence, the pointer stopped, and, as his fine, keen nose slowly elevated itself, his tail at the same time was extended horizontally, remaining stiff as iron, and as motionless.

The youth was now infected by his dog's

hunting instinct. He took up his gun and stole after, cocking the hammer as he went. At a short distance from the dog he paused and snapped his fingers softly.

The pointer plunged forward through the wire-grass and a bevy of quail rose just on the other side of the fence, scattering in every direction as they went. Two shots quickly followed, and three birds fell.

As the sportsman threw his smoking shotgun into the hollow of his arm preparatory to reloading, he muttered to himself:

"That isn't so bad with father's old Manton. after all. I wish the gun was a breech-loader though. S-s-t! Don! Go fetch!"

The well-trained dog sprang upon the topmost rail, then paused, while his bristles rose at sight of an intruder approaching up the opposite slope.

As the pointer plunged down to retrieve the nearest bird, a voice was heard ordering it back:

"Hi! Get out there! That's my bird!"

CHAPTER II.

TALKING ACROSS THE FENCE.

At the sound of the high, rude tones the youth who had shot the quail advanced to the fence, while an angry frown overspread his face. He was met by a stout, short-limbed lad of thirteen years or thereabouts, who proceeded to pick up the first bird he came to, while Don glanced inquiringly at his master.

"Drop that bird!" said the hunter, sharply; then added, rather too personally, "Drop it, I say, or I'll shoot that hump off your back!"

But the lad picked up the bird, revealing by the movement the reason for the allusion included in the threat of the other boy.

"Not much I don't," replied the newcomer,

reaching for another bird, whereat the hunter made a sly signal to Don. "This is our land, and—Good gracious! Keep that dog away! Ouch! Keep him off!"

Don had jumped at the boy's trousers, and was vigorously pulling him towards the fence, birds and all.

"Better drop them, Sid Ehrich," said the young hunter, laughing. "I told Don to retrieve, and he'll fetch them if he has to bring you in with them."

But Sid made a desperate effort and released himself from Don's grasp at the expense of a large tear in his trousers.

In his fright he dropped both birds and retreated a few yards. Meanwhile Don gathered up the quail and brought them one by one to the fence, where he laid them down.

"I guess you're Paul Roanoak, ain't you?" queried Sid, snappishly. "I heard you'd come down."

"That is my name," assured the other, quietly putting the birds in a rusty-looking game bag.

"Let me advise you, Master Sidney, to kill your own birds when you want any. If they fall on our side of the island we won't try to nab them."

"You've no right to anything on our side. I've heard my father say that. He says that old servant of yours, Uncle Ham, has got to stop getting oysters on our side of Waccamaw Point. I think you ought to pay for these trousers. They are new and now they are ruined."

"Is that so?" laughed Paul. "Well, I'm sorry, but it is your own fault."

This good-natured remark seemed to enrage the boy beyond all restraint. He shook his fists at Paul, and jumped about in odd contortions, that exhibited his deformed back and shoulders in a more repulsive light than ever.

Paul was struck with a sense of pity. Sid was still screaming forth half unintelligibly, when, before Paul could say a word, another young fellow of about Paul's age appeared.

He was tall and slender, with deep black eyes and a clear, dark complexion. His expression,

even at present in his anger, was eminently handsome and refined, though tinctured with a melancholy that often adheres to a poetic and sensitive temperament.

He nodded distantly to Paul, then seized Sid from behind by the collar and shook him vigorously. Then he turned the boy toward home, and, applying his foot by no means gently to the rear of those damaged knickerbockers, started him down the slope of the ridge at a round gait.

"Now you get!" said he, shortly.

And Sid continued to "get" until he reached a convenient pine, half-way down.

Behind this he popped, in wholesome awe of his elder brother, yet unable to resist a temptation to furtively listen to the further proceedings.

The newcomer turned to Paul.

"I think this is the son of Squire Roanoak, is it not?" he inquired, with cold politeness.

"You know my name," said Paul, carelessly.
"I suppose you are Jake Ehrich. I recall you

at school, though we did not move exactly in the same set, I believe."

Jacob was aware that Paul remembered him quite as well as he remembered Paul. But it suited the pretensions and strained relations of both to assume a difficulty in this respect.

"Has my brother Sidney been impudent? If so, I hope you will make allowances. He is very young and somewhat spoiled."

"It was nothing. I shot some quail. They fell on your side of the fence. Sidney objected to Don's retrieving them, and Don tore his trousers, I believe. That made Master Sidney mad, and he was letting off steam when you opportunely arrived. Here, Don! Let's go."

Paul turned away as if he had tired of this sort of forced conversation.

Young Ehrich glanced back; but, as Sid was behind the pine, he did not see that youngster, though Sid was eagerly listening.

Then Jacob looked at Paul, as the latter turned away, wistfully. A furtive expression of longing took possession of his face. Paul, suddenly turning to see where Don was, noticed Jake before the latter could alter or conceal the mute invitation to closer understanding that had momentarily escaped him.

Paul was struck with a vague pity, though he hardly realized what it was or why the feeling now usurped his usual disdain where the Ehrichs were concerned.

"Did you wish to say anything more, Jake?" he asked, gently.

"I—I wish you would not call me Jake," was the hesitating answer. "Can't you say Jacob?"

"I could say Jacob, of course; but—we see so little of each other that it hardly amounts to much. Why do you care?"

Jacob cast another quick glance after the invisible Sidney, and turned again to Paul. This time all sense of repression had changed to eager entreaty. The boy's face was transformed.

"Because it—it sounds coarse. Don't laugh. I know my folks seem coarse to you, because you do not like us. But I am not to blame for the

way my father has acted. When I met you at school, I was in hopes we might become friends. But we somehow kept apart. Now we are both home to stay, why couldn't we get along together? I always liked you, Paul. I've admired you, too; but you don't care—"

"How do you know I don't?" interrupted Paul, at the same time holding out his hand. "I like you now, Jake—I mean Jacob—though I hardly realized it before. You see the other fellows at school rather kicked at making friends, as well as I. But at home here, as long as we are neighbors, I don't see why we shouldn't get on."

"Certainly we will, if you will only meet me half-way. Your folks are high-toned, but hard up. My folks are not toney, but they have money. Isn't that about the size of it, Paul?"

By this time Jacob's new, assertive cordiality had revolutionized the feelings of Paul. At seventeen, one turns from one emotional extreme to another more quickly than later on in life.

In a moment more the two young fellows were seated on the fence, chatting away as if their relations had always been thus. Both became agreeably surprised.

Jacob found that Paul was quite a different boy from what Jacob had supposed, from the impressions derived at the aristocratic Beaufort Academy. There Paul was cold, defiant, and even rude. Now he was genial, off-hand, and loquacious.

Paul also felt that he had discovered a kind of social prize, where he did not look for much but rubbish. The refinement and intelligence that characterized Jacob were not at all like the boisterous rowdyism of Sidney junior, or the avaricious vulgarity of their father, Sidney senior.

At last Paul descended from the topmost rail.

"I declare I must go!" he said. "My father won't eat bacon, and if I don't hurry home with these quail, there'll be no meat for dinner."

"I wish you would let me send you over a leg of mutton," said Jacob, hurriedly, and in some confusion. "We killed a fat sheep, and it—it will spoil before we can use it all."

But at this substantial offer Paul seemed to regain some of his old, easy hauteur of manner.

"That would hardly do. My father would never accept it, nor do I think your father would exactly relish the idea of your generosity—in our direction. Twon't do, Jacob. You and I can talk to each other a little in private, as we are doing now; but that is about all we can do. I'm free to say I wish now I could have known you better at school, but it wouldn't have worked with the rest of my set. Do you fish?"

Jacob was not specially fond of, nor skillful at that pastime, but if it would bring the two lads together more he determined to be fond of it, then and there.

"Not much," he replied. "But that is because I don't know about cast-nets. I wish you would show me how, Paul."

"Why, of course!"

Paul hesitated. It was one thing to casually meet Jake and be social in private, but another

to make future appointments. Yet Jacob's eager, handsome face was irresistible.

"Say!" continued Paul. "Uncle Ham and I are going to Waccamaw Point to-night, at moonrise. The mullet will fairly jump into the boat. Suppose you get in your dory and run over."

"All right!" assented young Ehrich, delightedly. "Course I'll come! You and Uncle Ham must show me how to throw a cast-net!"

"Hi! Yo-oh! O-o-oh, Marse Paul!" came in somewhat husky and catchy tones, from the Roanoak side of the island.

"There's Ham, now!" said Paul, starting away. "He is come for those birds. Well, so long, Jacob! I'll look for you to-night."

Shouldering his gun, the squire's son moved off, with Don ranging some distance ahead. About that time the figure of an old negro appeared among the pines down the slope of the ridge.

Jacob stood motionless in his tracks for some time, looking after Paul. The glad elation gradually faded from his face, and in its place came a look of discouragement, and even sadness.

"I do like Paul!" he thought to himself. "But Paul only tolerates me. I can see that—" He was interrupted by a smart tap on the shoulder.

CHAPTER III.

UNCLE HAM DISAPPROVES-JACOB IN DISGRACE.

It was Sidney, more recalcitrant and less obedient than before.

"I heard what you and that Roanoak fellow said to each other, and I'm going to tell father—that's what I'm going to do. 'Please, Mr. Paul, may I go fishing with you?'"

Sidney threw into this last remark all his caricaturing skill. Then he squared his humped shoulders, obstinately.

"I'd be ashamed to try to make up to that high and mighty, I would. Why, he wouldn't wipe his feet on you at school, or in town, or anywhere, where folks would notice it. We'll see what father thinks when I get home." "I'm not accountable to you. What are you back here for anyhow? Didn't I tell you to dust?"

And in true elder-brotherly rage he again "booted" Sid down the ridge, nor desisted this time until that now roaring youngster was well on towards the boat. After that Sid was moody but silent. He was sullenly meditating revenge. Jake, who never remained long angry, spoke kindly to his brother when they got out at the pier, but Sid continued to sulk.

In the meantime Paul joined Uncle Ham. The old negro, whose face seemed to be formed of several rolls of wrinkles jumbled together in crude imitation of the human countenance, wore a look of remonstrance.

"Now, Marse Paul," he began, "whuffo' make you go an' take up wif dat low-bo'n trash, Jake Ehrich? Don't you know yo' folks don't like hit? De squire'll jess raar, dat he sho'ly will."

"Of course! That is, if you make it your business to go and tell him. See here, Uncle Ham, I've been away so long that I don't altogether see the use of snubbing even an Ehrich, when he tries to be civil. I know that is somewhat against Roanoak law and gospel down here at Waccamaw, but it is the way I feel, nevertheless. Is it going to be a good night for mullet, think?"

"Well, sah, if de wind lay, she sho' to be a good one. Dey's a schoolin' powerful thick longer 'bout now."

"I am glad of that. Jake is coming over to fish with us."

"What dat I yere? Who? Dat Jake? Jake Ehrich?"

"Jake Ehrich. And I hope you will be pleasant to him, Ham, because I have invited him. He wants to learn how to cast."

"Fling de cast-net? Huh! Better git dem boneyard niggers ter show him de way ob hit."

"Boneyard niggers" was Uncle Ham's scorn-

ful designation of the colored hands who worked in the Ehrich phosphate mill.

Paul laughed.

"I told Jacob that you were the best cast-net thrower on Johns or Edisto. At least I think he realizes that," added Paul, his conscience restraining him from a flat falsehood, though in a good cause.

"He orter know suttin' like dat if he got any sense," replied Ham, who prided himself on his reputation as a fisherman. "I ain't as spry as I once uster was, but when I see a passel er mullet, I in ginerly make out ter git dar."

"Well, if Jake comes, we must put him through in style. That needn't prevent father from having it out with Mr. Ehrich in his own way. Tell you the truth, Ham, I would rather live in peace and good feeling with our neighbors than not."

"Land er mis'ry! What you talkin' fer? Marse Paul, I is plumb ershamed. Is you fergit who dem Ehrichs was, an' who we was an' is?

Is yo' fergit, too, how dey up an' git holter dat plantashun er yo' pap's over on Edisto?"

"Oh, I don't forget, but I am tired of always having to remember. What good does it do? It doesn't bring back the land. Nor does it prevent us from growing poorer every year, while Ehrich gets richer. We ought to respect him for his financial ability, if for nothing else."

"Whoo-w-e-e! Dem big words don't make nuttin'. I lay Miss Europa fotch you ter time if she yere now. Gimme dem birds, Marse Paul. Good t'ing you can shoot. 'Bout de unly way you seem ter favor de Roanoaks dese days.'

By this time, being at the shore, Uncle Ham took the quail and ferried himself across the East Cut on his way to the kitchen of Roanoak Hall.

Paul, somehow, did not feel so happy after his concessions in behalf of Jacob as he thought he ought to feel. He had no idea of resenting Ham's free methods of expressing himself, for the old negro was a privileged character.

He had been born on the Waccamaw estate in

the days of Roanoak glory, before the Civil War, and he had lived with the Roanoaks all his sixty or more years. He would die with them, and Paul knew that he was true as steel.

Other slaves had scattered "after freedom," but Ham was a fixture. He had the right to give plain counsel that is born of fidelity and affection, and as Paul and Don took their way down the marsh to see if there were any ducks in the bite this side of Waccamaw Point, the youth felt a little ashamed of his moral half surrender.

It was nearly sunset when Mr. Sidney Ehrich senior pulled down the lid of his roll-top desk in his private office at the phosphate works.

Glancing through an outer window, he could see two of his own steam dredges at work in the channel of Waccamaw Sound. In his ears was the crashing noise of the "pulverizers," and the whir of belts, wheels and shafting.

A line of half-naked negroes were loading sacks of the manufactured product on to a great barge lying at the dock. Other hands were busy

here and there. The whole place was a hive of industry until the six o'clock evening bell.

While the proprietor sat in his office chair, clipping with his knife the end of a cigar, Sidney junior rushed in, looked about to see if any one besides his father was there, then he burst forth, impetuously:

"Father, I think it is shameful the way Jake and that Roanoak fellow have been going on together! Because I objected, Jake kicked me half-way home. Say, father, I wish you'd talk to Jake."

"Has Jacob been kicking you, Sidney?"
Mr. Ehrich shook his head disapprovingly.

His hair was thick, coarse and black. It was cut short, in "pompadour" style, and when he shook it over his narrow, sharp, black eyes, he looked a little like a porcupine shaking its quills.

- "Deed he was! And 'cause why? It was only for the reason that I told him you would not like it."
- "Like what? Have Jake and young Roanoak been fighting?"

"Not much. If that had been so I would have hung round and put in a lick for Jake. But that wasn't the way of it. Say, dad, what would you do if old Roanoak was to come up and want to shake hands, and go on over you, and all that?"

"I—I—" Mr. Ehrich hesitated, for down in his heart he knew that the cordial offer of a Roanoak hand would have delighted his soul, yet the fact that such a supposition was ludicrous in the light of probability angered him through his self-conceit. "Well, my son, I think I would turn my back on the fellow."

Sid looked at his father cunningly, then gave his humped shoulder an incredulous shrug.

"No you wouldn't, dad. Neither did Jake. He didn't even wait for Paul to make the first advance."

"How is that? Did he try to be friendly first?"

"You bet! I was hid behind a pine, but I could see that, though Paul let himself down a bit, he was friendly a good deal as I might be friendly with old Bose up at the house."

"So!" exclaimed Mr. Ehrich, lighting his cigar with quick, nervous puffs, and leaving the office, followed by Sid. "I will teach Jake a lesson he will not soon forget if he don't look out. He never was like the rest of us. He don't even want to go into trade. He wouldn't learn book-keeping, and he wouldn't stay at his Uucle Hiram's in Charleston. He would go to that fine academy at Beaufort, where these worthless sprigs of played-out planters' sons go, and he got well snubbed for his pains."

"They say young Roanoak wouldn't speak to Jake there at all."

"And now Jake makes up to him here! I will wear a hickory stick out on Jake, if he is nearly seventeen. He wants to be a lawyer, or an author. What do you think of that, Sidney?"

The young hopeful laughed, satirically. The idea of Jake becoming a man of letters struck him as being very funny.

"Jake wants to starve genteelly, dad; but when I'm big enough I want you to take me into the works. Bet your life I can make things hum! I don't care for these old planters. They haven't got money. They've got nothing but land, and they are always wanting to sell. You can own about all the land on Edisto, if you want to. But land is no good, if you ain't got no money to work it with. Is it, dad?''

"Sid, you are a boy after your father's heart!" Mr. Ehrich patted the little scamp, fondly. "You have the true Ehrich spirit. I wish that Jake was half so promising."

And yet Sidney knew full well that his father's denunciation of Jacob and his contempt of the aristocratic poverty around him was but a reckless expression of pique over the social rebuffs the Ehrich family had received.

They were now crossing the dry marsh toward the grounds of the Ehrich mansion. A shell road, neatly ditched, thus communicated with the works on the point.

At the edge of the woods they met Jacob sauntering along, in his usual half-despondent manner.

"You Jake!" called Mr. Ehrich. "I want to talk with you."

As Jacob came up his father angrily demanded what he meant by his conduct that day. Jacob, seeing that Sid had told his tale, shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

"Another thing, dad," added Master Sid.
"He even invited himself to go fishing with
Paul and that old Uncle Ham of their'n tonight."

"Is that so, Jake?" Mr. Ehrich thrust his stubby hands deep down in his pockets and chewed his cigar nervously, as he glared at his oldest son. "Be careful what you say, now!"

"This much of whatever Sid may have said is so. Paul Roanoak and I are friendly now, and I thought of going fishing with him to night."

Jacob spoke respectfully, but firmly. Yet he felt rather reckless as to the result. He had made up his mind what he should do, and if it brought around an open rupture with his father,

he did not feel just at present as if he would recede at all.

"Sidney, listen to him!" Mr. Ehrich seized Sid by the arm and pointed derisively at Jacob. "Ain't he a fine gentleman, my little son? We ain't good enough for him now, no more than his Uncle Hiram was in town. He'll be looking up his family tree next, I guess, Sid!"

Sid's loud, cackling laugh was so aggravating, that Jacob, who had taken things very meekly up to this point, flushed to his forehead.

He opened his mouth as if to speak, but the angry retort died in his throat. He choked down his passion by a violent effort, eyed his father with mute reproach, then turned away, dashing the tears from his eyelids, and made off at a rapid pace.

"Hold on, Jake!" called Mr. Ehrich. "I ain't done with you yet, sir. Stop right there, I say!"

CHAPTER IV.

SONA LEGARE—SID AND HIS FATHER PUT THEIR
HEADS TOGETHER—GOING A FISHING.

Unheeding the command to stop, Jacob kept right on, and presently was hidden by a clump of cabbage palmetto trees.

Mr. Ehrich and Sid, after waiting a few minutes, resumed their way toward the house, while the father's hand rested affectionately on his younger son's shoulder. To a man of his practical turn of mind and training, Sid was much more of a comfort than Jacob.

The oldest son sadly realized this as he wandered aimlessly through the woods, absorbed in gloomy reflections. The last rays of the sun shot glintingly through the pines for long distances. In between the sparse wire-grass the ground was springy with the dead, needle-like leaves. Near a great "clay root" was a hole, piled round with fresh and yellow earth, while just beyond the open road wound down to the ford, leading over to Waccamaw Island.

A dull, hissing sound rose from the grass, and Jacob saw a large turtle, making for the hole at its best pace. He laughed to himself, and, slipping up behind, placed both feet on the hard shell back of the animal.

"They say a turtle of this kind can carry a man's weight," he thought. "Now I'll try to prove it, if he ever sticks out his head again."

He was still standing on the turtle's back, when he heard a clatter of horse's hoofs, approaching through the woods toward the ford. At this juncture the turtle thrust out its head, and began to struggle toward its hole with some success, despite the weight of Jacob as he poised himself on the broad, curved shell of the creature.

"For shame, Mr. Ehrich! You are hurting the poor thing!"

Jacob quickly stepped off, as he glanced up at a girl on horseback, and in a long riding skirt, who had drawn rein at the edge of the road.

She was about fifteen, and looked fresh, petite and pretty, as she half-laughingly uttered her opinion of Jake's experiment with the turtle.

"Good evening, Miss Sona," he replied. "I don't think it hurts him. His shell is so hard, you know."

"But what earthly fun is there in tormenting it so?"

"I'd heard the colored people say that a turtle as large as this will walk off with a man on its back, so I—so I— But I won't any more if you think it is wrong."

"It looks cruel, whether it is or not. But—I must be going."

She spoke to her horse; but Jacob, after hesitating within himself for an instant, called out:

"Oh, Miss Sona, are you going to Roanoak Hall?"

Miss Sona Legare again drew rein, as she replied in the affirmative.

"I wish you would tell Paul that I—that I shall hardly be able to go fishing to-night."

"Very well. I am glad that you and Paul are friends. But I must hurry; it is getting late."

She rode on toward the water, while Jacob continued his walk, though turning toward the Ehrich house, in order to be home by dinner-time.

When Mr. Ehrich became a country proprietor, he changed his dinner-hour from one to six o'clock, whereat his aristocratic neighbors, who had always dined late, turned up their noses and smiled.

"I'm glad I met Sona," thought Jacob. "She is kin to the Roanoaks, yet she isn't stuck up. Paul may think hard of me, yet I cannot afford to quarrel with father. He will get over his fret, as it is. But there is no knowing what

he would do if he was to catch Paul and me together."

When Jacob next saw his father, that gentleman busied himself deeply in his newspaper. The son felt that conversation was not desired. He talked to his mother and older sister until the dinner was served.

During the meal Mr. Ehrich was uncommonly friendly with Sidney, but hardly said a word to Jacob. The latter soon rose and went to his room. He felt gloomy and despondent.

"I wish I could be something or somebody," he said, half aloud, to himself. "All father and Sid think of is the dollar. But if I could only adopt some intellectual career—be an author, for instance!" His eyes dwelt on a table littered with scraps of manuscript, books and papers. "But I don't know how to find out whether I am fit for it or not."

He thought of Sona's older brother, then on a visit to the Legares. He was a city editor. Jacob had intended, through Paul, to get an introduction to this editor, who often went hunting or fishing with him. But his father, by opposing Jacob's wishes in that direction, would deprive the boy of knowing the great newspaper man, whose opinion would be so valuable.

He did not dare to ask Sona to bring about the meeting. Though friendly enough, she was a girl, and Jacob was backward about asking favors of girls, as sensitive boys are apt to be.

Meanwhile Mr. Ehrich and Sidney, not knowing that Jacob had given up his fishing trip, were arranging a little expedition of their own.

"We will let Jake carry out his fine scheme," said Mr. Ehrich to his youngest son. "Then we will slip over in the dory and give him a surprise. I shouldn't wonder, now, if those Roanoaks were fishing on our side of the point all the time."

"That's what, dad! Old Ham steals our oysters, too."

"Now, Sidney," interrupted his mother, who was a woman of better judgment on matters aside from mere money-making than her husband, besides being more refined—"now, Sid-

ney, I wouldn't say such things if I were you."

"I think the boy is about right, Julia," commented Mr. Ehrich. "Old Ham seems to think because the Roanoaks once owned the earth, they ought to own it still."

"I don't believe any liberties their servants indulge in of that sort are looked on as such by them and their class. The planters seem to go fishing and oystering anywhere. It is custom."

"Yet it isn't right." Mr. Ehrich spoke emphatically. "I'm not going to let those people who think themselves above us intrude on what is mine. If they want to use my fishing-grounds let them come and ask for the favor. It would be some satisfaction to say no—confound 'em!"

Mrs. Ehrich said no more. She was well aware that her husband's sentiments sprang more from a sense of social injury on the part of his neighbors than from natural selfishness.

Sid laughed loudly.

"I'm with you, dad," he said. "If we catch 'em trespassing we'll tell 'em what we think of

such doings. Jake ought to be ashamed of himself to want to go about with any of 'em, I say."

The moon rose about nine o'clock that night. As its half-orbed surface rose over the low timbered line of Loon Beach, the water of the sound took on a lighter hue and shimmered convergingly towards a common centre that shot in a long line of prismatic sparkles athwart the sandy shallows abreast and beyond Waccamaw Point.

Shortly before this, Paul Roanoak accompanied by Mr. Edgar Legare, the editor before alluded to, left the Hall and made their way to the decaying wharf that marked the Roanoak landing in East Cut.

They were joined by old Ham as they passed the negro quarter. He bore a cast-net, a couple of oars, and a "gig," or fish spear. At the wharf they entered a long dug-out canoe.

While Paul leisurely rowed, Ham built a fire of "fat" pine in an iron basket, and hung it upon a projecting pole. Then he sat down in

the stern to steer while Mr. Legare took his position in the bow with the gig in his hand.

The dug-out glided noiselessly and slowly in and out by the marshy shore, while the spearsman watched the yellow wake left in the water by the fire's reflection.

As they followed the sinuosities of the bank, sundry living things would start up at this intrusion on their repose. A mink or muskrat, after receiving the gleam of fire-light in its bead-like eye, would slide into the water quietly. Once, a sullen plunge was followed by a nervous dart of Legare's spear. The steel struck something hard and rebounded. Legare drew it in by the hand-line, and laughed to himself.

"Gator-eh?" inquired Paul.

"Yes. He's got a hide like a piece of sole leather. But I gave him a scare. Hullo!"

This last exclamation was followed by a swift lunge with the spear. Something churned the water fiercely where the grains struck, and Legare began hauling in as fast as he could. Old Ham took up a landing-net, and, as the struggling mass floated at the canoe's side, scooped it up, spear and all, and deposited it in the bottom of the boat. Then he shrugged his shoulders, contemptuously.

"'I 'lowed you know'd better'n to bodder 'long er him, Marse Edgar."

"Marse Edgar" did look rather crestfallen at the broad, coarse-scaled fish, now breathing heavily, as the spear was extracted.

"Well, Ham, you see I thought it was a sheephead," he said, in excuse of his error. "But it will do for food, won't it, Ham?"

"No, sah. We-alls never bodder 'long er mud-drum, nohow. Dey's too coa'se, too bony, ter be good eatin'. Watch out, Marse Edgar. En't dat ar a sheephead comin' now?"

Mr. Legare made a furious lunge at a black shadow that slowly wagged its way along, attracted by the light. The steel barbs rang out as they struck the gravelly bottom, and the black shadow disappeared as if by magic.

"Dar, now, Marse Edgar, you gits in too big

a hurry! Dat de way you write fo' dat paper ob yo'n?"

"Well, hardly. You see, Ham, writing takes time-"

"So does giggin' sheephead, Marse Edgar. Hole up dem grains twell you kin squint right at de fish thoo de middle ob de barbs. Then hole yo' breaf an' let de gig slide like lightnin'. Dar comes anudder one! What you up to, Marse Edgar? En't you see him? Right dar. Now! now!"

While the old negro spoke in growing excitement, Legare poised his pole, took unusually good aim and cast the gig. Another churning of the shallow water betokened that he had not missed this time.

A moment later, a fine, large sheephead lay floundering in the canoe, its gray and whitish sides glittering in the firelight.

"This is a seven pounder, at least, Cousin Ed," remarked Paul, drawing in his oars. "Let me try my luck now. The moon will be up presently; then we'll have to take to the cast-net."

Legare sat down and took the oars. Paul, with the gig handily poised, stood like a statue. Uncle Ham kept the fire replenished and watched the water. Suddenly a loud, hoarse, rasping screech rose from the marsh close by, that was accompanied by the heavy flapping of large wings.

"Dat feller's a sand-hiller, I bet," said Ham. "Powerful good eatin' dis time er de year, too. Marse Paul, whyn't you fotch yo' gun along?"

"Well, now, Ham," replied Legare, "that is asking too much. How are we to see to shoot a sand-hill crane in the dark, and it flying away?"

"Shoot by de sound, Marse Edgar."

"You might as well try to shoot by the smell. I will follow your lead in fishing, Ham; but when it comes to guns and pens, I have opinions of my own."

Ham, nothing loath for an argument, was about to reply, when Paul motioned for silence, at the same time laying down his gig and taking out a large revolver from a holster under his coat.

"Dat boy got sense," muttered Ham to himself. "I 'lowed he got suttin' ter shoot wif whenever he on de water or in de woods."

They had rounded the left-hand point of the three that made the shape of the island resemble an oak leaf, and were crossing the shallow bay towards the long tongue of land called Waccamaw Point.

A low, intermittent splashing of water was approaching the canoe. At times short swirls would take place, as if the element was being violently agitated by some swiftly moving objects.

"Cirvallie, aren't they?" asked Legare, in a low tone.

Old Ham nodded, then added, in a whisper:

"Suttin' atter 'em, too. En't you year dat choog-choog, way up de cove?"

A sound fell on Legare's ear that seemed to confirm Ham's words. Paul was gazing beyond the sheen of firelight, regardless of sundry curving flashes of phosphorescent sparkle dividing the waters about the boat into two masses of

pale flame, that hissed as the shoal passed on at bow and stern.

These were large, bright, shining fish, nervous as a pond pickerel. At times they leaped into the air in their eagerness to get away from something—not the canoe, certainly, for they thrust themselves closely about its side in their efforts to pass. The flaming torch dazed, yet did not frighten them. A heavily moving object behind at last made a tremendous dart, dividing the shallow waters into two curving masses with startling celerity.

The cirvallie, though rather large fish themselves, jumped and scurried about in furious efforts to escape. Paul, taking rapid aim, fired once—twice—thrice—then seized his gig, at the same time motioning Ham to sheer to the right sharply.

Meanwhile a terrible churning of water was taking place about the spot Paul had fired at. Dull gleams of a yellowish cast showed themselves amid the white sparkle of waves. Once a great forked tail rose upward out of the yeasty

pother, and at another instant a long, jagged, saw-like protrusion was fleetingly seen. Legare became excited.

"Give it to him, Paul. He's badly wounded as it is. I must have that saw for my collection. It's at least three feet long."

Paul, half crouching in sportsmanlike eagerness, was watching a chance to deliver a cast with the gig that would not only complete the work the pistol-balls had begun, but also secure the great fish and prevent its escape in its dying struggles. Ham, manipulating an oar, brought the canoe cautiously near.

At length Paul launched his spear. Instantly the struggling saw-fish rose in the air, came down with a splash, then darted away.

The hand-line attached to the spear spun through Paul's hands at a lively rate. The fish showed such unexpected strength and vitality that the boy was afraid to take a turn round a cleat lest the slender cord should break.

"Let um have hit all, Marse Paul," said Ham, now using his oar as a pole, and shoving the dug-out forward in the wake of the fish. "We kin foller in dis shoal water."

Presently it could be seen that the creature was tiring. Paul drew in on the hand-line until he came to the spear-handle, floating and attached to the barbs in the fish by the all-sustaining cord.

"Easy now, Marse Paul!" Ham bent over the side as he spoke. In his hand was a fishcleaning knife. "Don't 'sturb him twell I git a chance ter make my lick."

As the long, yellow body came swinging alongside just beneath the surface, it was partially turned on its back.

"He's gwine ter make a die out'n hit. Lemme wind him up."

While speaking Ham reached forth and plunged his knife in deep, just behind a forefin of the fish. A wriggle and a quiver followed, and the saw-fish turned completely over, its cream-colored stomach glistening in the firelight.

It was at least six feet long. From the fron-

tal bone below its eyes projected a saw-like appendage that might have been thirty inches long.

"He is a fine one, sure," said Legare, stroking its smooth, yellow side, that deepened into buff on the back. "I suppose I may have the saw, Paul?"

"You can have the whole fish, Cousin Ed, and welcome. Ham will tow it in as we go back."

The old negro was now working a sharp-ended pole into the sandy bottom. To this he made fast the saw-fish, by lashings wound around the large teeth of its saw, that were also looped over the pole.

They skirted along the east side of Waccamaw Point, and Paul made another cast, but missed.

Then Ham, after replenishing the firepan, pointed to a broad, dark shadow, that seemed to be burrowing its way into the mud.

"Yere you is, Marse Paul!" he exclaimed.

"Stingeree! Lemme have dem grains. I nuver passes one er dem trash."

Ham took the fish-spear, poised it dexterously and drove it into the black shadow with a vim that indicated a profound interest in the success of his performance. When he raised the spear, the black thing was suspended on its point. Two great wings flapped heavily as it was thrown in the bottom of the boat.

Ham killed it with his knife. Then, tucking the blade under a sharp, bone-like formation at the base of the creature's tail, raised up the sting, discovering it to be some three inches long.

"Gre't king!" he ejaculated. "Look at dat, Marse Edgar. How you like, when you learnin' to t'row cast net, to feel dish yere t'ing poppin' inter yo' foot?"

Ham, as the leading cast-net manipulator, hated a stingray as badly as most people hated a rattlesnake. When they neared the point Paul motioned toward the distant ocean.

"Our time for gigging is about passed," said he. "Get out your nets, Uncle Ham."

Then he put out the lights by emptying the blazing contents of the firepan into the water, where they sputtered, hissed, and floated silently away.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER THE MULLET—AN INTERRUPTION—A SOUND

OF OARS.

Ham produced two cast nets, one of which he prepared to use himself. Paul sat down in the stern and took up a single oar.

"Now, Cousin Ed," he said, "Ham will show you how to hold your net. You had better let him throw first, and see how he spreads it over the mullet. Then, do just as he does."

The net used by Ham was of a circular shape, and when spread out would cover a space four yards or more in diameter. The meshes, converging to a common centre, were strongly lashed around a circular piece of horn, through which passed a long hand-line, that was at-

tached to various "tuck-strings." These, in turn, were fastened to a lead-line, surrounding and binding the outer edge of the net.

The old negro grasped this net by the horn, held it up straight and doubled it once in his left hand, which also held the coiled hand-line.

Legare clumsily did likewise. It was not as easy as writing heavy leaders on party politics. Ham did not seem to mind it, however.

"Now, Marse Edgar," mumbled Ham, taking a turn of the lead-line between his teeth and throwing sundry folds of the net over his right arm, "don't you git 'scouraged. Dish yere de way."

Mr. Legare, with his mouth filled by the line and two of the leads, made an inarticulate response, as he, with Ham's assistance, got himself into position to cast the net.

Meanwhile the moon had risen above the eastern horizon, and the darkness was giving way to a pale glow in the atmosphere that slowly brightened. Sundry flips and splashes of water began to be heard here and there. "Mullets air 'ginnin' ter jump," whispered Ham. "Git a leetle fudder out, Marse Paul. Big mullet en't runnin' very close to sho' now."

The negro, with his net ready, stood in the bow. Legare, in a similar attitude, was amidships. With a noiseless occasional stroke Paul sent the long, narrow dug-out forward at a proper speed, bending as the sound of splashes increased or diminished.

The night was very quiet, rendering the cries of frog and bittern startlingly distinct. A light breath from the west fanned their faces, though not sufficiently strong to ruffle the water.

At last they ran into a shoal of mullet. The phosphorescent play of water, caused by the movement of fins and tails, looked like a myriad of struggling glow-worms mingled inextricably together. Suddenly Ham threw his body half round, to give the net full swing, then crouching, to brace himself, flung it as far as possible.

The unfolding canopy whirled gracefully just along the surface of the water, and settled

like a heavily-weighted parachute upon the mass of phosphorescent flashings.

At the same time Legare attempted to do likewise. But the strain of Ham's efforts had set the canoe to rocking. Legare's net fell short in a disgraceful heap, instead of gracefully spreading out as it should have done.

Legare himself lost his balance, waved his arms wildly, uttered a comical cry of dismay, and fell overboard, just as Ham hauled in a dozen or more of fine mullet and shook them out in the bottom of the canoe, where they flopped furiously for a moment or so.

Paul sprang forward and assisted his cousinaboard, restraining his natural desire to laugh. Ham gave one wild whoop, then constrained himself to look grave, though the effort was necessarily severe.

The water being about waist deep, Legare had managed to keep his head and shoulders dry. He laughed the loudest of any as he shook himself, while Paul hauled in the net.

"Gracious, boys!" he exclaimed; "that was

a corker! You see, I was afraid the net might get tangled, so I merely went over to see about it—eh? Ham, you old sinner, why don't you laugh out? Don't die of internal convulsions, man."

Thus adjured, Ham exploded again, with the force of an overcharged gun. His whoops of merriment rang through the woods on either side. All the while he was wringing the water from Legare's clothes and covering him with a blanket.

"S'cuse me, Marse Edgar. But seem like you was in too much ob a hurry. Next time yo'll do bettuh, I know."

"I'm done for to-night. Let Paul take my net. I'll steer and paddle. I can keep wrapped up—so. But I say, Uncle Ham, you shook the boat. I believe you did it on purpose."

Ham whooped anew at this jocular insinuation, and hushed only at Paul's command, for they were approaching another shoal of fish.

By this time, in their pursuit of the retiring shoal of mullet, they had trenched considerably on the Ehrich side of Waccamaw Point. No one noticed this; for, according to neighborhood custom of old, the different fishing-grounds were used in common by any one.

Their entrance into another shoal was signalized by a furious leaping on the part of the startled mullet. One fine fellow leaped clear into the canoe, landing into Legare's lap.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "You cannot say now that I did not catch any mullet when we go back."

No reply was made to this exulting remark, for two things just then happened. Both Paul and Uncle Ham cast their nets into the shoal, and a sound of oars was heard approaching from the direction of the Ehrich pier, which lay about half a mile up the West Cut, that here united with the East Cut at Waccamaw Point.

While the fishermen were drawing in their well-burdened nets, a rowboat slowly came into view with two persons aboard. The larger figure at the stern quickly called out:

"What are you doing here trespassing on my side of the point? Don't you know these fishing grounds are private property?"

There was a moment of silence, then Paul asked:

"Is that Mr. Ehrich?"

"This is Mr. Ehrich and his son Sidney. We heard that somebody would fish here to-night, and as parties have been trespassing before, I thought I would come down and warn you. Might save you trouble, you know."

Another pause, then this query came over the water:

- "I suppose you know who we are?"
- "My impression is that you are from Roanoak Hall. Row up a little, Sidney. I want to see these men."
- "It is not necessary to say any more," said Paul. "We will withdraw to our own side. It is so customary to fish anywhere that we did not know that we should be regarded as trespassers."
 - "Hold on! I am not done yet," called out Mr.

Ehrich. "Somebody has been getting oysters at our bar in the West Cut. I want that stopped too. We will—"

"Everything of that nature shall be stopped, Mr. Ehrich," interrupted Paul, sternly. "Had we known that you objected we would never have gone on your side of the water front at all. But as every one about here does these things and always has done them, it is natural that we should do them, not knowing your views. We are glad that we do know them now."

The youth had seated himself at the oars, and pulled away rapidly as he spoke.

Mr. Ehrich, who evidently still wanted to talk things over, perhaps because of a lingering feeling that he was doing something that would cause him to be more despised, called out again. No reply was made.

The fishing canoe had receded until it was almost invisible far over on the Roanoke side of the point.

Nothing was said by the occupants of the dugout for some time. They could hear the Ehrich boat going back to the Ehrich pier. Ham stood in the bow with his net ready for another cast. Paul played with his oars in the water some time, then said:

"What do you think of that, Cousin Ed? Did you ever know a sea islander to talk that way to any one about the fishing-grounds?"

"It is certainly singular. What is the fellow up to?"

"Well, you know he made his money in town—a trader of some kind, father says. But since he got hold of our Bugle Point place and went into phosphate mining and planting, he has wanted us all to regard him as one of us. Of course, that wouldn't go down."

"Well, I should think not," replied Legare.

"Father is hasty, and he was rude to Mr. Ehrich when they met," continued Paul. "So was your father, Cousin Ed. Uncle Dick said Ehrich never had been a gentleman, and it wasn't in him to be one. So the talk went round, and Mr. Ehrich found himself snubbed on all sides whenever he made any social ad-

vances. So he drew back into his shell, and he now seldom shows himself, except to assert his rights, as he calls them, something as he did just now."

"He did not hide his light under a bushel tonight. I hear it said that he acquired his right to Bugle Point in a queer way."

"So father says. But there is Jake Ehrich. I rather liked the fellow, though I cut him somewhat at Beaufort. Had to, you know. Other fellows wouldn't allow any compromise. But I met him to-day, and we got to be quite chummy. He was to meet me over here to-night and join our fishing."

"Very likely that was put forward as a blind, in order to find out at what time we would fish. He doubtless told his father. They probably watched, and, on hearing us, came over in high and mighty indignation."

"I've been thinking that, too. It seems the most likely way for one of that family to do, though I did begin to think better of Jake. Why

did not he come along, do you suppose, Cousin Ed?"

"Ashamed to, most likely. Hadn't the gall to face you, after spying out our intentions when he met you so amiably this afternoon."

Paul did not reply. He played with his oars until cautioned by Ham to attend to business.

As he resumed his slow stroke, he sighed. Perhaps he was regretting that the good feeling he was beginning to have for Jake must be dropped under the natural logic of the interruption to-night. For some time the canoe, in silence, patrolled the Roanoak side of the point, and Ham made several more casts. A goodly supply of plump mullets, from eight to fifteen inches in length, were in the boat's bottom.

"We might as well go home, I reckon," said Paul, at length. "We've got fish enough—sure. Do you want to try the net again, Cousin Ed?"

"I'd rather try some dry clothes, I believe."

As Paul brought the canoe round, and rowed back toward where they had left the sawfish, a

second sound of oars was heard. The strokes were short, rapid and nervous.

Under the moon's full glow they presently discerned a boat approaching down the West Cut.

"Hanged if Ehrich isn't coming back!" said Legare. "Maybe he has thought of something else we ought not to do."

"Is that Paul Roanoak?" now came over the water, in tones too clear and boyish to resemble those of Mr. Ehrich.

CHAPTER VI.

JACOB AGAIN SURPRISED—A CONVICT'S ULTIMATUM.

Paul started in surprise, and for an instant he looked pleased, then his face slowly grew hard in expression.

"I am here," he called out, but without easing up on his stroke. "It's Jake," he added, in a lower tone, to Legare.

"Hold on!" cried Jake, now pulling so as to intercept the canoe. "I have something to say to you, Paul."

The latter reluctantly slowed down until Jacob sidled up in a small but elegantly-made boat. The contrast between its shell-like proportions and dainty coloring, and the heavy, unpainted

hull of the dug-out, spoke volumes as to the pecuniary status of the respective owners thereof.

"I say, Paul," began Jacob hurriedly, "I'm late. But things turned out differently than I hoped for when I reached home. Has—has my father been here? But what is the use of asking? I know he has."

"So I expected," said Paul coldly. "And now, having made an excuse that needn't have been made, will you let us pass on?"

"No, but-I-don't-I-"

His manner was that of one both excited and hurt. It was evident that he desired to say something deprecatory of his father's conduct, but the cold reserve manifested by the rest, even to Ham, confused and bewildered him at first.

The dug-out was passing on. Suddenly Jacob laid a detaining hand on the gunwale, near the stern. Then he saw Legare closely. Here was the very man he wished most to know—an editor, who could advise him. And now Sidney and his father had ruined any chance he might

have had before of making his way in that direction.

The freezing manner in which Legare drew himself back gave Jacob a chill, but he made out to stammer:

"Indeed, Paul, I am not to blame for what father may have said. I regret it exceedingly."

No response came from the other boat. Jacob withdrew his hand, and the canoe passed on. He saw it gradually grow dim, until the last vestige of its shadow was swallowed up in the opaqueness of the moonlight. Then, dropping the oars, Jacob's hands went to his face. He groaned heart-breakingly, and the tears dropped from between his fingers.

Finally he forced himself to cease his weak lamentation, feeling a kind of disgust for himself and a bitter distaste for the environments of his lot, as he saw them. Sona would turn against him now—even Sona. Sona had always been friendly, and he liked her the better, as he contrasted her manner with that of other highborn girls and boys about.

"Her brother will tell her that I was to blame for father's words to-night. Paul must think that I am. Then, when we meet, she will freeze me out, too. I wish I was thick-skinned, like father. He nor Sidney don't seem to care much."

The tide was ebbing, and Jacob suffered his boat to drift out toward the sound. He was in a state of mind that made him shrink from going home at once. It seemed as if he almost hated his home just then.

So with idly hanging oars and head sunk between his shoulders, he sat brooding over the irritations of his situation for a good while. He had met his father and Sid on their return, and, learning from his brother just what had passed, he slipped away at the first opportunity and made his way to Waccamaw Point, to make such explanation as might set him straight in Paul's estimation. His sense of defeat was bitter.

"They will hate our folks worse than ever, and they will despise me. Yet I do not know what else I could have done."

The balminess of the air, the mellow flush of the moonlight, conspired with the gentle rocking of the boat to make Jacob careless of his surroundings as he drowsily brooded. He might have finally dozed a little. He was not certain about that afterward.

But it seemed that the boat, after being carried by the tide slowly to the northeast angle of Edisto, was whipped into an eddy there, and sent out into the sound toward a cluster of scrub-covered sand-banks that hovered about the extreme edge of a bar that made in from the inlet at Loon and Mullet beaches.

Something sharp scraping along the bottom of the craft at last aroused Jacob. He looked about in a confused way. Instead of being near wooded shores, a wide expanse of water was all around. No; here, almost at hand, was a mass of low scrub, canopied by a dwarfed palmetto tree. Other islets stretched behind. The shore he had left was still visible, yet only in a vague way.

Just as Jacob collected his ideas and obtained

his bearings, something crashed through the bushes on the nearest islet.

Young Ehrich took up the oars. Scarcely had he dipped them again in the water, when a figure rose above the scrub, with violently waving arms and loud cries. These last, though at first unintelligible, resolved into entreaties, and finally a half-pleading, half-threatening request for Jacob to wait.

"I say—you governor, there!" said the voice.
"Please don't leave me. Wait a bit, can't you?
I say! You must wait!"

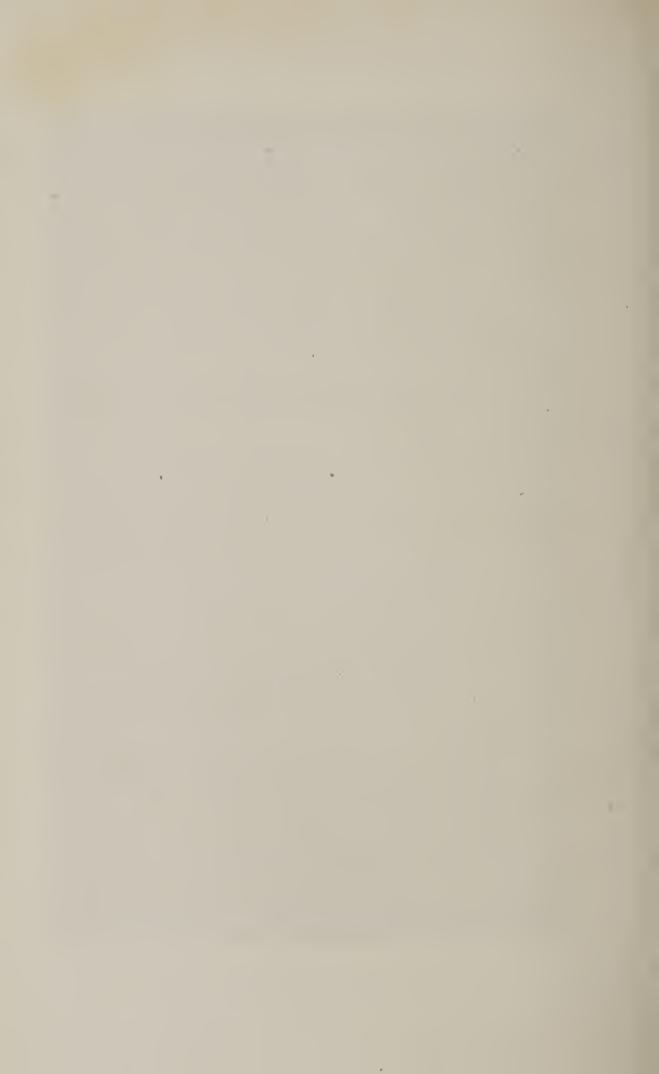
Something forbidding and terrifying about the tones, more than the words, caused Jacob to begin rowing. But it appeared that he was on a submerged rock. Before he could push off, there was a furious rush from the scrub and a plunge into the water. An instant later a large hand was laid on the boat, and a heavy form clambered over its side.

Jacob had read of wild men and their usually hairy and alarming appearance, and for a moment he thought he now had to do with one of



A figure rose above the scrub, with violently waving arms

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those unfortunate creatures. Bristling hair, a straggling beard and cavernous eyes that glinted sharply even in the moonlight, together with mere shreds and patches in the way of apparel, formed a very dubious combination to deal with in his present isolated situation.

"Got any grub aboard?" asked the man, coolly turning Jacob out of his seat at the oars with a strength of arm that was irresistible.

Jacob struggled and protested, but was pushed into the stern sheets notwithstanding.

"Got any grub, I say?" and the fellow raised his voice.

There was a stale lunch which Sid had placed in the boat's locker the day before; but it had not been used, as the boys returned from the fishing they had undertaken in time for luncheon at home. But Jacob was angered at the arbitrary actions of this unknown invader.

"If there is, I don't know that you have any right to it," he replied.

"I'll see about that," said the stranger, ris-

ing quickly as he spoke, and seizing Jacob round the waist.

The youth struggled, but was held on one hip, much as a woman might hold an unruly child, with one hand.

The rascal's strength was certainly tremendous. He cast a rapid eye over the boat, under the seats, then forced open the locker. He was in the act of grasping the lunch in a ravenous manner, when Jacob, despairing of releasing himself by other means, suddenly closed his teeth on the fleshy part of the man's leg above the knee.

A yell followed. Dropping the food, the man lifted Jacob bodily and flung him with great force into the bottom of the boat, nearly upsetting the light craft with his violence.

The boy became momentarily insensible. When he came to, the flare of a close blaze dazzled his eyes. The man had found a box of matches, and, having devoured the lunch, was looking for more, striking matches one after another.

Jacob's head ached. He was not a strong youth, but he possessed a good spirit, and he was filled with resentment at the way he had been treated.

There was no weapon in the boat, while he could see, strapped to the man's waist, a long, sharp knife.

As Jacob looked, the bright glare of the burning matches brought out much which the more vague moonlight had failed to reveal in the man's appearance.

His clothing, though extremely ragged and dirty, was striped in dingy black and gray colors. Jacob had seen such clothing once before, while at Beaufort. On an excursion to a convict camp, where a new railroad was building, he had seen men wearing a similar garb.

The thrill of repugnance at this discovery was yet big within him, when the man, in his search, brought his bearded face close to Jacob, as he still lay between the thwarts. Then the boy experienced a second surprise, even sharper

than the first. He drew himself up, and, as the man noticed the movement, he exclaimed:

"You're Radnor Gillis, aren't you?"

The convict fell back, then he struck another match and held it close to Jacob's face.

"The old scoundrel's son, by George!" he ejaculated, under his breath.

Then, without replying to Jacob, he seemed to debate something within himself. Jacob rose painfully, and seated himself in the bow.

"Hurt you much?" queried the man, suddenly looking up.

"Well, you did not do me any good. If I were a man, and strong, like you, Rad Gillis, I would get even with you for this. When did you get out of the pen?"

"Long enough for my hair to grow. That is enough for you to know. I have traveled by night, and laid in the swamps until I'm about used up. But I made up my mind I would see Mr. Ehrich before I finally gave up."

"What good will it do you to see him? Why don't you get some other clothes?"

"I tried, but I couldn't. I'll get 'em now. You'll fetch 'em. I'll see your governor, because I need money."

"How can you expect him, or any of us, to do anything for you now? Father helped you, at the time of your trial, all he could."

"It's a lie!" shouted Gillis, in almost insane excitement. "He pretended to help me, but he was the man who really sent me up. But for him, I'd have been acquitted. Five years I've been there. When I had a chance, I skipped; and I've laid around here for a week, until I got so hungry I made up my mind to risk anything for a square meal again. Then I hailed you. See here, Jake! I've got to see the old man. That's what I'm waiting for. I couldn't get no chance at him, without exposing myself to others. That wouldn't do, in these convict's togs."

"Where did you escape from?"

"Down on Pocataligo. There's a camp of us down there; and a horrible place it is."

"I tell you frankly, Rad, that it will be my duty to let people know where you are. I don't

believe what you say about father. He is not that kind of a man."

"Now, Jake, you used to be a good sort of boy, back in Charleston, when I was clerk for old Hiram Ehrich. You know that I was steady and faithful, too. Ain't that so?"

"Yes; and we were never more surprised than when we heard that you had been arrested for forging Uncle Hiram's name. Of course, if father knew you were guilty, he had to swear to facts when he was put on oath. But he obtained you a good lawyer—you know that."

"He had that lawyer fixed, Jake."

"How can you say that?"

"Because it is so. But let that slide. Had I not helped your father in one of his schemes, in a way that it became inconvenient to have me afterwards around, I wouldn't have gone to the pen. But I'm out, and I'm going to try to stay out. The old man must help me, and you'll go and tell him I'm waiting for him. And you'll fetch me some clothes, too!"

"I will do nothing of the kind. I will have

you arrested, though; you may depend on that."

"Now, I'll only ask you to do this. Just call the old man out, and tell him Rad Gillis is waiting for him down at the landing. Then, if he says give the alarm, go ahead and give it. But he won't say it, Jake."

Gillis smiled fiercely and took up the oars.

"You might add that if he don't show up with money, grub and clothes in half an hour, that I'll be apt to be at Roanoak Hall when he hears of me again."

Then he began pulling, with long, powerful though somewhat clumsy strokes. The angry retort that had risen to Jacob's lips was checked by this last remark. Absurd as the statement seemed to be, the man's calm self-assurance was staggering.

So Jacob said little more. He steered the boat back to the now deserted pier in the West Cut, and left the convict in a clump of near-by palmetto. As he started off, Gillis called him back.

"Just say to the old man that while I was in

the pen I could not, of course, get the ear of any of the Roanoaks. But I can now. And Jake, if you or your father meditate any treachery, you won't find me here when you get back. I'm watching you. And be sure you bring plenty of grub. Dodging bloodhounds and fighting mosquitoes in the swamps don't lessen a man's appetite."

CHAPTER VII.

MR. EHRICH'S DISCOMPOSURE—SIDNEY JR. AT THE WHARF.

Jacob felt sick at heart as he reflected over what had happened that night. Life hardly appeared worth living just then.

By opposing himself to the general custom regarding the freedom of the fishing grounds, his father had already increased the social prejudice against the Ehrich family. Jacob's reception by Paul and Legare, notwithstanding his attempted apologies, evinced how he himself would now be treated by those he most desired to stand well with. Even Miss Sona Legare would probably snub him when next they met.

On the heels of this comes the unwelcome apparition of Hiram Ehrich's former clerk, fresh from a prison pen, and uttering the most preposterous threats.

Jacob did not believe them, yet he felt very uncomfortable as he hurried through the pine woods avenue leading from the landing to the house.

As the hour was rather late, Jacob found his father alone in the library. The rest of the family seemed to have retired. Mr. Ehrich was at his desk, where he spent much of his time of evenings when at the house. As Jacob came in, he frowned.

- "Are you alone, father?" asked the son, tremulous with suppressed emotion.
- "Yes. And I want to talk to you, Jake. Where have you been?"
- "I was out rowing," replied Jacob, avoiding the primary object of his trip in the boat. "The tide carried me out to the banks, near the inlet. I met a man there, father. He came to the

wharf with me, and he is waiting to see you. Can you guess who it is?"

"Some tramp, I reckon." Mr. Ehrich looked more impatient than curious, yet his son's excited manner did not escape his notice. "Why did you not send him about his business? What did you bring him over for?"

"I couldn't help myself. He jumped aboard while I was aground. He said he must see you. Father, it is Rad Gillis—"

"Wha-at?"

Sidney Ehrich's hard, dark face grew ashy all at once, and Jacob, witnessing it, felt his heart sink. Could there really be any truth in Gillis' alarming insinuations?

"It is Rad, sure enough, father. He looks as if he had lain in the swamps for weeks, and he wants us to fetch him clothes and something to eat."

Mr. Ehrich expelled his breath in one huge sigh. Then he tried to look incredulous.

"You must be crazy, Jacob. Rad is in the pen. It is impossible. You have been dream-

ing, my boy," he added, almost in an entreating tone.

"I wish I had been. But he is down at the wharf, and no mistake. It's Rad, with his ragged stripes still on, and all—"

"We will get help and capture him!" broke in Mr. Ehrich, hastily. "Go call Sidney."

"Listen, father! He said we dare not go back on him. He insinuated terrible things. He told me to say that if you were not down at the wharf soon with money, grub and clothes, he would go over to Roanoak Hall. He says, now he is out, he can get the ear of the Roanoaks. To show how confident he feels, he said to me, 'You tell the old man I am here, and if he says to give the alarm, you give it.' Then he added, 'But he won't say it, Jake.'"

Mr. Ehrich slowly collapsed as Jacob rapidly went over these words. The boy no longer doubted. His father's manner was more convincing than mere words. Gillis had not spoken without warrant. Jacob could now see that.

"Shall I call Sidney now, sir?" he asked, though he divined what the reply would be.

Mr. Ehrich had sunk down in his chair in a daze of thought. He ran his hands through his hair, making it stand yet more erect as he looked up. Jacob repeated his query.

"No, Jake; no. Don't call any one."

The man's manner grew fond and even entreating. He fawned upon his son in a way Jacob had never seen him do, except in the old Charleston days, when Ehrich, the pawnbroker, was very anxious to make a sale to a hesitating customer.

"I must trust you, Jake. You must slip into the dining-room quietly. There are eatables and some wine on the sideboard. Wrap up a lunch, Jake, and hurry, my son. He may be gone—to—to Roanoak's!"

Mr. Ehrich looked strangely alarmed at the idea. Jacob, with his heart crying out within him, hurried off, hardly knowing what he did. When he returned, with some food wrapped in a paper, his father was waiting in the hall with

his hat on. A bundle of clothes was under his arm, and he was nervously counting a roll of bills in the dim light of the hall lamp.

Again Jacob felt a sickening sensation, but his father hurried him outside in a stealthy manner.

"We must hustle, Jake," whispered Mr. Ehrich. "Gillis may be gone, and then—"

He broke off abruptly.

"Father," spoke Jacob, quickly, "is it really so what Rad said to me? Is all of it so?"

"I—of course. But don't ask questions, boy. Hurry on faster. He may be gone."

Jacob did not want to ask anything more just then. He realized that this ragged escaped convict was somehow connected with something which his own father feared. That it was something most compromising and dishonorable could hardly be questioned, after what Jacob had seen and heard that night.

The wind had risen and the melancholy soughing of the pines sounded inexpressibly dreary, while the pale moonlight was more

ghostly than cheerful, as it played queer, fantastic tricks among the waving shadows of the branches upon the wire grass.

Shortly before reaching the pier the pine woods gave way to a fringe of palmetto, that in turn debouched upon a narrow expanse of saltwater marsh, dotted here and there with isolated cabbage-palms or small clumps of sawpalmetto. At the edge of the woods father and son halted, in obedience to a signal from Mr. Ehrich.

"Hist!" he whispered, nervously. "I think we are followed. Remember, Jake, if anything happens, not a word of what has passed to-night to any one. Do you hear?"

Too sick at heart to be startled at any interruption, Jacob wearily assented. It seemed to him like sealing a compact with some mysterious shadow of dishonor, yet what else could he do? It was his father who entreated, rather than commanded him.

The sounds in their rear resolved into a swift patter of feet. Then Sidney junior bobbed into

view, looking eagerly about, for the others had stepped aside, behind a pine. Sidney stopped and peered around. Then his father pounced on him, with a fierceness Sid had never been subjected to before.

"You, Sidney!" he exclaimed, seizing the lad by the collar. "Why ain't you in bed, eh?"

"D-don't shake me so, dad! I h-heard you and Jake g-go out, and—and I thought I'd follow and s-see what was u-u-up—don't, dad!"

Mr. Ehrich was shaking and cuffing the inquisitive boy with a half frantic vigor, entirely unnatural with him. Sid began to blubber.

"Now you get back to the house," ordered the father, his voice tremulous with mixed passion and apprehension. "If I find you awake when I get back, I'll wear you to a frazzle. I mean what I say. Off you go!"

The hitherto half-spoiled and wholly indulged lad was simply too overcome by the drastic suddenness of this assault to say a word. He retreated, whimpering, in the direction of the house.

Mr. Ehrich watched and frowned and fidgeted until Sidney had disappeared, then turned to Jacob, who, amid his own painful emotions, had beheld this scene apathetically.

"Now, Jake, which way? Hurry! He may not wait—"

A muffled shout down near the pier arose. Then came a furious splashing of water from behind the cluster of cabbage-palms, where Gillis was supposed to be concealed.

Mr. Ehrich stared, gasped, muttered to himself, then dragged Jacob after him, at a run.

"I believe he is gone. Which way, Jake? That nearest clump? Hurry! hurry! Perhaps it was only an alligator or a porpoise among the fish."

Father and son, both infected with the same torturing eagerness, ran along the shell road leading to the wharf, and paused near the cluster of trees. Everything now seemed to be quiet. No one but themselves was in sight.

They approached the palmettos, and Jacob called in a subdued tone. There was no reply.

Mr. Ehrich, unable to patiently endure the strain of suspense any longer, dashed into the shadow of the trees, and made a brief but thorough search. When he came out, he tottered, as if the actual facts of the case were too terrible to be calmly borne.

"What is the matter with you, father?" asked Jacob. "Are you ill? Where is Gillis?"

Mr. Ehrich sank down on a tussock and mopped his face with his handkerchief, as he thought of what might take place at Roanoak Hall before morning.

"Ruined! ruined!" he ejaculated, regardless of Jacob's query.

The boy, with a new, vague terror at his heart, plunged through the clump of trees in his turn, also calling at intervals, in cautious tones:

"Gillis! Oh, Rad! Why don't you answer, man?"

But there was no reply. Neither did he see any one.

The convict was gone.

CHAPTER VIII.

SONA AND CLAR'SY-THE BOAT AND FUGITIVE.

After supper, Sona Legare went to her room at Roanoak Hall, accompanied by Clar'sy, the mulatto waiting girl, who usually attended on the feminine visitors at the squire's. Paul and Edgar had not returned from the fishing, and Squire Roanoak was in his own den, busied over some vexing plantation accounts.

Sona began to look around for her satchel, but could not find it. Then she was struck by a sudden remembrance.

"When I crossed Waccamaw Island," said she, "I thought I felt something give way. It must have been the strap that held the satchel. But my pony was loping, and I did not think much of it at the time." "What you gwine ter do now?" asked Clar'sy. "All you night t'ings in dat satchel, ain't hit?"

"Yes; and as there is no young girl here, I cannot borrow. Oh, Clar'sy! I'll tell you what. You and I will slip out, run down to the landing, take one of the canoes and go over and look for it. It's moonlight, and we'll be sure to find it. I will then have what I need, and Aunt Europa need not know. There is no harm in going, but she might think it hardly the proper thing."

"Why not tell Unk Ham when he come back? He go look fo' hit."

"No, I'd rather go myself."

So Clar'sy assented, and the two girls stole quietly down the stairs. Without discovery they made their way furtively along the avenue of pines to the water front, paddled across the cut in a small dug-out that the fishermen had not taken off, and were soon on the Ehrich side of Waccamaw Island, looking carefully along the bridle-path for the missing satchel.

The moon now shone brightly. Presently the girls found the satchel lying in plain view in the middle of the path. Sona pounced upon it, uttering a cry of delight. When she found that its contents were intact, she gave it to Clar'sy, and the two were on the point of retracing their steps as a sound of oars was heard.

From where they stood the faint outline of a boat could be seen coming down the West Cut. It approached the Ehrich pier rapidly, as if the occupants were about to make a landing there.

"Let us go," said Sona. "We must not be seen."

Sona's words were cut short by the sudden sight of a man emerging from the palmettos at the water's edge close to the pier, who ran down stream, splashing the water as he went.

The boat, close at hand, was nearer to the woods than the man, whose position was on the point from which the wharf projected. The boat, coasting along in a sort of bite, had thus doubtless sent the man into the water rather than toward the woods.

The man fell, uttering a muffled shout, but was up again in an instant, and already was nearly across the narrow and shallow cut. But, instead of pursuing the flying man, the boat increased its speed, and made down stream at a pace that put it behind a point of land below, just as the figures of Mr. Ehrich and Jake became visible as they hurried toward where the convict was expected to be.

All this was observed by Sona Legare and Clar'sy under the bright light of the moon now high in the east. A vague alarm took possession of them, and they hastened up the central ridge of the island, feeling as if they had remained too long already. In their haste, they missed the path, and wandered into a grove of turkey oaks, where the light penetrated more dimly.

"Sho now!" exclaimed Clar'sy. "En't dish yere pervokin'? Seem like dat path orter be out yan way."

Thus diverted, she sought the missing path in one direction, while Sona looked in another.

The latter was presently startled at hearing a loud yell from the maid. This was followed by a shrill, unintelligible jabbering as Clar'sy appeared to adjure some one or some thing to keep off.

Sona ran forward. Clar'sy was no longer to be seen, though the sound of her retreat through the shrubbery was audible. Sona was about to follow, when the apparition of the convict, still in full retreat, halted her and brought her heart into her throat.

"Who are you?" demanded Gillis, his courage reviving as he saw only a girl before him. "Who is that making such a racket yonder?"

Sona stood motionless, her heart sinking lower and lower after its first leap of apprehension, for she distinguished the fierce, tramplike aspect of the man. Nevertheless, she managed to say:

"It was only a servant-girl you heard. Please to let me pass."

"Easy now! I'm in a close place myself. What boat was that going down the cut?"

- "I don't know. I must follow my maid now."
- "You'll stay here and answer me!" interrupted Gillis, boldly seizing her arm.

The hot blood of the Legares momentarily overcame the girl's timidity when she felt the rude touch of the man. Jerking loose, she struck the convict smartly with her open hand and darted after Clar'sy, whose screeches were loudly in evidence not far away.

Gillis felt his cheek and appeared dazed by the unexpectedness of such an act, then he followed in pursuit. Meanwhile the boat below had crossed the cut, and was rowing rapidly up the Roanoak side of the island, when Clar'sy's screams saluted the ears of its occupants. At the landing they saw the colored girl run into the shallow water, wildly waving Sona's satchel and still screaming.

"What on earth can be up?" said Paul Roan-oak. "We seemed to have stirred things up over at the Ehrich wharf, and now the deuce is to pay at our own landing."

"Uncle Ham," remarked Edgar Legare, who

was still seated in the stern, wrapped up, "you should not have insisted on tolling us off to the upper oyster bar, instead of our going home at once, as we intended. You seem to have raised the Old Harry. Put in, and let us see what is the matter."

"Yes, pull in," added Paul. "I wouldn't stop at Ehrich's landing if that fellow that run from us had been my best friend. But we can do as we please here— Bless me! Hurry up, Ham! That sounds like Clar'sy's voice."

As they pulled in to the island shore, Clar'sy came plunging through the shoal water and climbed into the canoe.

- "Bless grashus! Dat you, Marse Paul? En't I glad you come! Somer you bettah go and look atter Miss Sona."
- "What's that?" called Edgar, rising and throwing off his wrap. "Where is Miss Sona?"
- "What are you doing out here this time of night?" added Paul.
- "Miss Sona, she up and made me go. Dat how kum I yere."

"That is Sona's satchel," said Legare, picking up the article from the seat where Clar'sy had dropped it. "What in the world has happened, Clar'sy?"

Clar'sy, with much panting and gesticulation, managed to relate the cause that had brought Sona and herself to the island; then told what the two had seen, and how she herself ran, thinking that Sona would follow. Before she had fairly finished, the two young men were ashore, running up the path, and calling on Sona to make her presence known.

Uncle Ham deliberately fastened the large dug-out beside the one used by the girls, and took up a camp-axe that was in the canoe.

"Whur you gwine, Unk Ham?" asked Clar'sy, unwilling to return to the shore and dreading to be left alone.

"Shet yo' mouf, gal!" he retorted, angrily. "If I uz Marse Edgar, I lay I w'ar you out fer leavin' of Miss Sona in dish yere way."

Then the old man himself disappeared. A girlish cry or two rang out in the distance.

Clar'sy threw herself in the bottom of the dugout and shivered, apprehensively.

A heavy splash in the water caused her to peer over the gunwale. Then she nearly fainted, for a forbidding-looking tramp was jumping into the smaller canoe. When Clar'sy was unable to do anything else, she could always scream. She screamed now.

Gillis—for it was he—uttered a savage imprecation, and threatened to kill the frightened girl then and there if she uttered another sound. Then he took a boat-pole, and, pushing off, punted the canoe across the East Cut, plunged ashore and disappeared.

Meanwhile Paul, running up the ridge, came across Sona herself, seated quietly on a log and looking quite composed.

"That you, Paul?" she said. "I am glad you came. I—I lost the path, it seems."

"Thank goodness, I have found you safe, Sona! Why did you not let some of the servants go after your satchel? It is not always safe to be out at night. There are so many bad men

wandering about. Who was it you and Clar'sy saw?"

"Then you have found Clar'sy? I'm glad of that." Sona appeared not to heed Paul's last query. "I think we might as well go to the house."

So back they went toward the boat and were soon joined by Edgar and Uncle Ham. Edgar was alarmed enough to be provoked.

"You are very imprudent, Sona," said he. "Whom did you see? And why did you venture on such a trip with no one but Clar'sy?"

"One would think I had done something terrible! I only wanted to get my satchel. I knew pretty near where I had lost it."

Sona pouted and bridled, but Paul divined that she was unusually reticent as to the particulars of their surprise.

At the dug-out, Clar'sy broke into hurried explanations as to what had befallen her there.

Paul questioningly eyed Sona, who compressed her lips and said nothing.

"This must be looked into," said Legare, as he and old Ham pushed the dug-out across.

Then the party hastened through the pines to the hall. On entering the general sitting-room, an unusual sight confronted them.

Clar'sy shrank back, uttering an exclamation of fear.

CHAPTER IX.

THROUGH THE WINDOW—SONA TAKES A RIDE—
BROTHER EDGAR APPEARS.

A stout, clean-shaven old man, of a commanding air and presence, was seated in an easy-chair near the centre of the room. Beside him stood a tall, faded lady, with a look of apprehension overspreading the usual aristocratic composure of her face and manner.

Standing before them was an unkempt, ragged man in dingy convict garb. Behind him an open window, with a low sill, indicated the probable method of his entrance. Edgar Legare gave this character a keen glance.

"Rad Gillis, by all that's wonderful!" ex-

claimed the Charleston editor. "Get to the door, Ham."

While Paul stationed himself at the window and Ham moved to the open door, Sona's eyes lighted up with a strange, soft expression, as if she pitied the hunted man thus seemingly brought to bay.

"You need not fear me," said Gillis, noticing these precautionary moves. "I was trying to get away, I confess, but when I found myself at Roanoak Hall, after I left the dug-out, I thought I might as well stop and tell my tale and be done. I dare say Ehrich won't help me, anyhow."

"The best place for you to tell your tale will be in the parish jail," replied Mr. Legare, promptly. "It must have been you who scared my sister and her maid. Don't be uneasy, Miss Europa. Has he said anything out of the way, Uncle James?"

The squire hesitated a little.

"Well, no," he said. "The fellow had just jumped in at that open window hardly a minute

before you came. He was saying that he meant no harm. That was after I had ordered him out, and was about to call for some of the negroes. Europa," he added, in a stately, condescending way, "seat yourself. We are in no danger now, surely."

"None in the least, uncle. But I know this fellow. I attended his trial. He is an escaped convict."

Miss Europa drew back, expressing by her manner intense aversion and added alarm, at these words of her nephew.

"Send the dreadful person away!" she begged. "Sona, come to me, child. Don't go near the man."

But Sona only smiled, and her mobile face still expressed more of commiseration than dislike.

Gillis, seeing the aversion inspired by his presence, sneered visibly. He noted, however, that Paul, for some reason, drew away from the window. Was it to give the hunted man a chance to escape?

Gillis, however, resolved to make another effort to tell what he had—under a sudden impulse—sprung into the room to reveal.

"Squire Roanoak," said he, "I know a thing or two about your neighbor, Ehrich, that you ought also to know. I did not intend at first to blow to you, but—"

"Silence, sir!" commanded the squire, at last aroused by what seemed to him the degradation of listening to a convict's yarns.

"We will take you where you can talk, my man," remarked Edgar, at the same time motioning for Paul and Ham to close in.

Gillis saw what was up. He likewise understood from the squire's hardening countenance that he would not be listened to there. Nor had he any notion of being captured then, for he now felt only resentment at this rebuff.

He had wanted to tell the Roanoaks that which it would have benefited them to know, hoping, perhaps, that in return they would feed and shelter him, and even also exert themselves to secure for him a pardon. Instead of this, re-

capture and detestation were about all that he could read in the threatening faces around him.

Sona looked different, but she was only a girl. Perhaps Paul— Here an advance by Edgar Legare and Uncle Ham caused the convict to leap towards the window. Paul was there. Something in the boy's eye encouraged the man, and as he passed, Paul heard these whispered words:

"Come to the big oak—Towie Swamp—I—" A leap out into the darkness, and the convict was gone.

Edgar advanced angrily, when Sona cried out:

"Poor fellow! I am glad he got away."
But only Paul heeded the words.

"I am ashamed of you, Paul," said Edgar.
"I thought you had more nerve than to let that fellow through. After him—all hands!"

And Edgar, unmindful of his still wet clothing, leaped out into the grounds, closely followed by Ham. Paul did not stir.

"Why don't you follow them, sir?" de-

manded the squire, angrily. "It is the least you can do. I am ashamed of you, too."

"I'm not, Paul," declared Sona. "I hope you will stay right here."

The squire stared at this unexpected ally, while Sona serenely continued:

"When he overtook me on the island, I told him I was helpless, and asked him not to harm a girl like me. He said he wouldn't harm me for the world. It was only at first that he acted so fiercely."

"Confound his impudence!" growled the squire. "If you were my daughter, Sona, I should punish you for being out there."

"I know, uncle. But don't be cross. After he went from me so meekly, I felt sorry for him. I don't care what he has done. I hope he will get clear off. There, now!"

"Sona," said Paul, in an undertone. "I saw you felt sorry for him, so I had to feel sorry, too. Neither Cousin Ed nor Ham will catch him this dark night."

Sona flashed a grateful glance, and as if to

bear out Paul's word, Edgar Legare and the negro at this moment re-entered the house. The convict was not to be seen.

"What did you mean by letting the rascal by?" asked Legare, irritably, of Paul. "You did not even put out your hand."

"I must say that your conduct is susceptible of only two interpretations, neither of which is creditable to you, as a son of mine."

As the squire got this off, in his stately and somewhat affected way, Paul could not resist a smile.

"Perhaps I did wrong," he admitted. "But I felt sorry for him. He had come here, he said, to tell us something which he thought we ought to know."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Edgar. "He only wanted to curry favor for some selfish reason of his own."

"Then, too," added Paul, "I saw that Sona felt the same way as I did; and there you are. Heigho! I am going to bed. I should think,

Cousin Ed, that you would want your own wet clothes off."

With this Paul bade them good-night, and vanished before more words could be said. Sona presently did likewise; then the others, one by one, dispersed to their respective bedrooms.

The following afternoon, as Sona was riding through the pine woods on her pony, a little colored boy handed her a crumpled piece of paper, on which were written a few words, in a clerkly hand and in lead pencil.

"Please excuse this," it ran. "I saw that you and Paul Roanoak seemed to have some pity for an unfortunate wretch, who has been more sinned against than sinning. Indeed, this is true. If you really wish to hear my story, give this note to Paul, and ask him to bring you to the place he knows of, some afternoon within a week. Come just before sundown. I will be there every evening, if not taken meantime. You see, I trust you both. I feel that you will not try to make my lot more miserable than it

is. I can also tell Paul something that will be of great benefit for him to know. R. G."

"Poor fellow!" thought the girl.

Then she looked around for the little negro, to question him as to the giver of the note; but he had suddenly taken alarm, and was scooting over the crest of a gentle ridge like a rabbit.

She turned in the other direction, and the cause of the boy's flight became apparent.

Young Jacob Ehrich was approaching through the woods. His horse was picking its way at will along one of the many cow trails thereabouts, while Jake himself sat with bowed head and dejected mien.

Sona's first impulse was to canter away. She had listened at the breakfast table to Edgar's and Paul's account of what had happened at the fishing ground the night before. To one of her training and disposition, the action of the elder Ehrich and Sidney was, as she expressed it at the time, "Perfectly disgusting!"

She almost wished that she had never seen an Ehrich. She certainly felt regret that such peo-

ple must be numbered among their neighbors. On the heels of this, however, the picture of poor Jake, rowing up and vainly attempting to soften or explain away the rudeness of his father and brother, persisted in intruding itself.

It thrust itself before her fancy now, even as she was about to coldly ride away, and caused her to rein up her pony and hold out her hand, while a smile of friendly welcome irradiated her pretty face.

"Then you won't turn against me?" said Jake, impulsively, as his melancholy, handsome features flashed forth into an expression of pleasure.

"Why, no! Why should I? You and I have always been good friends. I don't know why the rudeness of others should set us against each other as long as we—we really like to—to be friendly."

"Neither do I."

Jacob was like another person now as the two cantered side by side through the open pine woods, with a soft carpet of wire-grass and dead pine-needles beneath the unshod feet of the ponies.

Sona had thrust the note into her glove, and presently the couple were chatting about various unimportant subjects quite gaily. Jacob, though, appeared to feel as if some apology were due.

"I was awfully sorry, Miss Sona, that father and Sidney acted so. Yet, what could I do?"

"I am sure you did all any one could be expected to do. You tried to apologize, and got snubbed for your pains. Didn't you, now?"

"I didn't know what else to do. Besides, I liked Paul, and I wanted to meet your brother, you know."

"Why did you want to meet Edgar? He is good and all that, but even I am a little afraid of him at times."

"You see, he is an editor. He writes articles, and they are printed. He makes money, and is independent. Oh, Miss Sona, you don't know how I long for just such a career as your brother has made for himself! That was one rea-

son why I wanted to meet him; yet there was another."

"Indeed! Edgar must be a more desirable person to know than even I was aware of. Pray, tell me what the other reason was."

Jacob colored a little, and Sona, hardly knowing why, blushed likewise. It made her look prettier than ever.

"I reckon it must have been because he was your brother."

Sona started her pony, and laughed lightly, possibly to hide a mild degree of confusion. As she did so, something white fluttered from her whip hand to the ground. Jacob saw it and sprang down.

"What is the matter now?" said she, not noticing her loss; then her color fled momentarily as she took back the crumpled paper.

"It may be of no importance," observed Jake, as he remounted. "But I thought you ought to have it back."

"Certainly," said Sona, in an absent way, regarding Jacob so intently the while, as their

ponies walked along, that the youth grew confused in his turn.

"Have I done anything wrong?" he asked.

"Do you know a man named Radnor Gillis?" said the girl, with an air of sudden decision.

It was now Jacob's turn to grow pale. This he did to a degree that Sona wondered.

"Yes," replied Jacob, at length, in a constrained tone. "I do know the man. Has hehas he been to—to Roanoak Hall?"

The question escaped his lips in spite of himself.

"I saw him last night. He also came to the Hall. Brother Edgar and Uncle Ham tried to capture him. I was sorry for him, and so was Paul. Perhaps it was wrong. I hardly know. Anyway, the man got away. I will be frank with you, Jacob. This note is from him."

For an instant Jake felt a wild desire to be equally confidential with Sona, but the thought that he might compromise his father restrained him. He merely said:

"The man surprised me in my boat last night and wanted something to eat."

"I hope you fed him well. Poor fellow! He looked so hungry and anxious."

Sona then related how she had first met Gillis on the island, after he had fled from the boat containing Paul and Edgar Legare, and also told how her sympathies had been excited.

The mysterious flight of the convict was now made clear to Jacob; for neither he nor his father had arrived at the wharf in time to see the passing boat. He felt relieved when he elicited from Sona that Gillis had not been permitted to talk at Roanoak Hall. Whatever it was that the man wanted to tell, Jacob felt that it would be to his father's injury. Though he failed to sympathize with his father's ways, as his brother Sidney did, Jake was too dutiful a son to wish, by word or deed, to cause his parent trouble, whether trouble was merited or not.

Sona was true, and he felt that she was his friend still. Would she continue thus were she to know that there was a likelihood of Gillis'

being in possession of facts that would redound to his father's discredit? This fear, and the consciousness that the good name of the whole family might be placed in the keeping of others to a dangerous degree, made Jacob reticent throughout.

"I went to the house to get him something to eat; but he ran away before I got back. I was puzzled at what could have scared him, but your account explains all that."

"What do you suppose it could have been that the wretched man wanted to tell Uncle James about?" asked Sona, innocently enough.

"I—I don't know," faltered Jake.

Nor did he. He only feared the worst, though he really knew nothing of a certainty as to the subject of Gillis' proposed revelation.

"I know one thing," continued Sona. "I hope the poor fellow will get clean away. Edgar says he has been imprisoned five years already. I'm sure that is punishment enough for any one for anything."

Here Sona would have liked to tell Jacob

about what the note contained; but feeling—as Jake did—that the safety of another was involved in such confidence, she refrained, and only said:

"This note acknowledges that Gillis is aware of the sympathy felt for his suffering by Paul and me. That shows he is not without gratitude. If Paul had not been willing, he could not have escaped."

"There comes your brother!" suddenly exclaimed Jacob, conscious of a sudden sinking at the heart as Edgar Legare galloped up with a fowling piece across his saddle-bow, and accompanied by two fine pointers, one of which was our old acquaintance, Don.

"Sona," said her brother, nodding to Jacob with an air of haughty civility, "I think Miss Europa was asking after you. Probably you had better ride back, as we are going home tomorrow."

Jacob saw at once that Legare had no notion of leaving them together. He also could not help feeling that Edgar's behavior toward himself stopped only just short of such actual rudeness as a man might consider it worth while to show to a presuming boy.

"Well, I must be going, too," said he, determining to relieve Sona of the embarrassment of assuming the initiative in leaving. "Good-by, Miss Sona. Good-by, Mr. Legare."

Edgar Legare made no reply. Jacob cantered off, feeling very sore over such treatment from the man whom he wanted especially to have think well of him. Legare turned to Sona.

"Have I not been a good brother?" he asked.

"I suppose so. But you are very rude to my friends at times."

Sona frowned slightly as she spoke.

"If I am rude, I have reason to be so. It is for your good."

"No one shall make me believe that Jacob Ehrich is bad or common, or anything of that sort."

"I mentioned no names. But, in fact, my dear sister, the Ehrichs are not suitable people

for us to know. You must be guided by your elders in some things."

"I like Jacob, and I don't care who knows it—there!"

"Whew! Well, then, I don't like Jacob, and I care not who knows that, either. But, bless me! We mustn't quarrel over these newcomers. Listen to the dogs! I believe they have started a rabbit. Ride on, Sona, unless you would like a rabbit chase."

"There—there, Ed!" cried the girl, excitedly, yet carefully hiding her note this time. "Look at Don! There goes Brer Rabbit!"

And off the two went through an old field overgrown with briers and sedge grass. The dogs were in full cry after a brown and white ball that went leaping and bounding from thicket to thicket, over ridges and through gullies.

At times the chase led round and round some unusually thick places, then the riders sat still and the ponies pricked their ears. Then off and away they would go again, until at last bunny

was overtaken by the dogs and killed in a trice. At that Sona grew remorseful.

"I declare, Ed, I wish you had not come by with your cruel dogs. What harm does a poor little rabbit do?"

"None in the world, unless in being great sport for the dogs."

"Great sport!" Sona frowned again as she rode off. "Men are such cruel creatures. Two-thirds of what they call fun or sport consists of hurting each other or killing helpless things. I'm off, Ed."

CHAPTER X.

IN THE SWAMP-OLD JA-JA.

Legare called in his dogs and put them after quail. When he returned to Roanoak Hall he had a good bag to show.

Sona ate quail for breakfast next morning with an undisturbed appetite, and Edgar forebore to remind her of this physical lapse from her moral tenderness of the afternoon before.

That night Sona drew Paul aside and showed him the note she had received from the convict. Paul looked grave at first, but when she announced her determination to go with him to the rendezvous the very next afternoon, he relented.

"I don't suppose there will be any harm," he

said. "I can ride over to your house. It is not far from there to Towie Swamp."

"We can go out riding, and make some excuse on our return about being delayed, if we are out later than we ought to be. I hope Edgar will be away somewhere."

In accordance with this programme, Paul and Sona on the following evening rode off through the pine woods from the Legare house, the girl and her brother having meantime gone home, as was suggested. Edgar was out on the plantation with his father, so the two had no trouble in getting off.

They "loped" their ponies for half an hour through the pines until they came to a wall of hummock. This soon merged into swamp, where a thick undergrowth mingled with lofty forest trees that canopied the place with gloom.

A narrow bridle path led them deviously so far from the sunlight and open woods that Sona grew nervous. At last Paul helped her down and tied the ponies to overhanging grape-vines. Then they started on foot, leaving the almost blind trail and plunging, under Paul's guidance, into the dimmest recesses of the great swamp.

"Oh, me!" exclaimed Sona. "I fear I ought not to have come. I am a-a-afraid! A-a-h! What is that, Paul?"

Towie Swamp, though not more than three miles from Legare House, had all the appearances of remoteness and inaccessibility. Things looked to Sona, as she grasped Paul's arm, as if no human being had ever before penetrated so far into this dolorous region of mire, tussock and malaria. The two were walking on logs and stumps, and springing from one tree-root to another.

"What is what, Sona?" said Paul, half laughing. "I don't see anything alarming."

"Can't you hear?" shivered the girl. "There it goes again!"

A wail like that of a child arose for the second time, and was succeeded by a series of weird sounds that ended in a dissonant screech.

"Oh, that is only a squinch-owl, as the negroes call them. Lock! There he goes!"

A grayish bird flapped its noiseless wings so close to Sona that she shut her eyes.

"It looks larger than it ought, seems to me," she said.

"Well, it is of a larger species. But there is no harm in them, unless you have chickens to lose. But here we are! Do you see that great live-oak yonder?"

Paul pointed to an immense tree, the branches of which covered at least a fourth of an acre. The trunk was tremendous. Fifteen feet up, half a dozen great limbs forked in every direction, each one of them being larger than the other gum, bay and ash trees around.

"This is the big Towie Oak," said he. "People say that it is hundreds of years old. Now, if our man is here, we—"

"There he is!" interrupted Sona. "No—it is some one else. Let us go, Paul."

A figure suddenly appeared, descending with preternatural activity through the branches of the great oak. In the gloom of the swamp—as the sun was nearly down—objects were only in-

distinctly revealed. The figure, on reaching the ground, dodged quickly behind the tree. Then the two young people could hear a low, melancholy whine, far up among the loftier branches. But whatever it was could not be seen, owing to the foliage.

"What on earth can it be?" whispered Sona, whose very lips were now white. "That is not Gillis."

Paul, peering closely, regretted that he had left his revolver at home. He had a stout pocket clasp-knife of the hunting order. This he furtively opened with his free hand, unknown to Sona, who was grasping his other arm.

"Let us wait here a minute," said he, in a low voice. "Perhaps the thing will discover itself."

"Oh, Paul, I wish we had not come!" Sona was losing her self-command rapidly. "Let us run back to our horses."

"We cannot We would make mis-steps and get bogged up in the mire. Besides, if it is some animal, it might follow when it saw that we were afraid. Listen!"

Something else was descending the limbs of the great oak. It appeared to be smaller than the first object, and it whined plaintively as it clambered down backward. Paul now laughed heartily.

"How can you, Paul?" said Sona, who felt much more like crying. "We may both be killed right here."

"Oh, no! It is only a bear and cub, Sona. You know, our bears about here will run every time. I saw you riding after the one the dogs were chasing through the saw-grass back of your lower cotton-field."

"That was in broad day, and I was on my pony; and papa and a lot more were after it, too. I don't feel safe here one bit. They say a bear with a cub will fight."

"She will have to fight me before she reaches you. There, now, is she not funny?"

"I don't think it funny at all. I wish we were at home." And Sona clung to Paul closer than ever. "Why does not Gillis come?"

The old bear came out from behind the tree,

and, thrusting the cub aside, cautiously peered at the young people, with queer and awkward cranings of the neck. Step by step she slowly advanced, until their antics lost their ludicrousness to Paul in the possible meaning of her singular approaches.

Now and then the cub would leap clumsily up on the mother, only to be thrust aside again. All the time the old one was gradually drawing nearer, but whether out of mere curiosity or from a more unfriendly purpose was not fully apparent.

Paul compressed his lips resolutely, as he gently, yet firmly, placed Sona behind him, where she stood trembling, and evidently fearing the worst.

The gloom was deepening rapidly. In the swamp twilight already seemed to reign. The time was past for the appearance of the convict, according to his own appointment. Paul would have seized Sona and retreated, but for a fear that such a manœuvre might precipitate an attack.

Although, as he had said, there was usually little danger apprehended from the common black bear of that coast under ordinary circumstances, the actions of this one, taking into consideration the fact of her having a cub along, rendered him uncertain what to expect.

At last the bear rose to its hind feet, beat the air with its paws and uttered a loud, warning growl. Sona was greatly terrified.

"She'll rush on us next," thought Paul, though he only gripped his knife the tighter as he spoke cheeringly to Sona.

But Paul was mistaken as to the cause of this last manifestation of anger. A limb cracked some distance away. Looking in the direction from whence the sound came, Paul saw dimly a tall man approaching rapidly. He was leaping from log to tussock until he reached the firm ground about the great oak. Then the bear whirled and scuttled off into the swamp. The man quickly leveled a weapon and two shots rang out in quick succession.

Bruin snarled, and ran faster than ever. A

cry from the wounded cub halted the mother, and she turned and rushed at her new adversary, who, planting his gun fairly against the bear's side, continued his deadly fusillade.

Mother and cub soon fell, mortally wounded. When Paul came up the man was finishing them with a big machete, or cane-knife, which he carried.

"I am glad you came," began the boy. "We had about given you up. If I—"

Paul stopped as the stranger, turning, raised his figure to its full height, glaring down upon the lad with eyes that glowed like coals in the deepening twilight. This was not the convict. The man before him was black. His clothing was a mere mass of shreds and patches. His size was almost gigantic, and as the astonished youth paused in his speech, he seized Paul by the neck with a hand that gripped like a vise.

"Ya-ya-y-a-h! Got um fast-got um fast!

Ja-ja got boy-got gal! Ya-ya-ya-yay-a-h!"

The screech of laughter with which the fellow

prefaced and concluded his rapidly spoken words scared Paul almost as much as the bear had terrified Sona. The tones were thick and guttural, and the enunciation so swift and jerky that only one accustomed to the peculiarities of the coast-African jargon could have understood what the man said.

"That you, Ja-ja? I did not know you were about. Glad you got the bear, though. He might have caused us trouble. I left my gun at home."

Paul spoke nervously. He had never met old Ja-ja in just this way before, though he was well aware of his condition. Ja-ja was the neighborhood wild-man. For years he had been suffered to make his home in the swamps, and to rob hen-roosts and kitchens in a small way. Ja-ja had been a slave of the Legares.

Out of good nature and indulgent commiseration, the easy-going sea-islanders had endured him for years, some deeming him dangerous, and others harmless in his loss of reason.

Clothing would be left for him at sundry

places in the swamp. In winter time food was also carried where it was thought he might get it. Sona had once rescued him from the hounds during a big deer-drive. He had the strength of a giant and the shyness of a fox as a rule.

But now his manner was fierce and menacing. Some one had given him an old army breechloader, and the excitement caused by the slaughter of the bears might be the cause of his present behavior towards Paul.

At any rate, the pressure of his grasp grew unendurable. Paul tried to release himself, but the only effect was to make Ja-ja tighten his grasp and smile more sardonically than ever.

"Let go, Ja-ja!" cried Paul. "Let go, I say!"

"Got um fast! Ya—ya—y-a-h! Got um fast! Got—white—boy—fast! Ya—ya—y-a-h!"

Paul, though more alarmed than ever, was a boy of too much nerve to submit to such rough handling unresentingly. He drew back the hand that held the jack-knife, but Ja-ja seized it quick as lightning.

A cruel wrench, that wrung from Paul a groan of pain, followed, then the knife dropped. The half-witted negro's eyes gleamed wildly. But before another move was made Sona had flung herself between the two. Bearing her light weight upon the negro's arm, she looked him reproachfully in the eye.

CHAPTER XI.

BACK HOME—EHRICH SENDS A NOTE—SIDNEY

TRIES A PLAN—HOW IT WORKED.

Ja-ja, on his part, suddenly released his grasp of Paul, while an expression of pleased surprise shot athwart his dark, savage features, that even the growing darkness did not entirely conceal.

"Good gal! Gub Ja-ja grub. Gub Ja-ja coat. Gub Ja-ja shu't. Ya—ya—y-a-h!"

He patted Sona's head and seemed to go at one emotional bound from anger to childish pleasure at sight of the girl, whom he evidently recognized as one of his favorites and benefactors.

"Paul is my cousin, Ja-ja," said Sona. "You must be good to him. He is a Roanoak."

"Ro-nuk strike Ja-ja." The huge negro scowled. "Ja-ja go 'long, tend own bizness. Ro-nuk come 'long—whack! whack! Ja-ja catch um. Ja-ja lick um. Lick white boy—white boy, Ro-nuk."

His teeth clicked fiercely, and he looked as if he would like to vent his spleen again upon Paul. But Sona resolutely kept between the two, and finally said:

"We must be going. We came to see some one else, but he did not come. Thank you for killing the bears, Ja-ja. I have a coat for you at home, you know."

While speaking she drew Paul away, still keeping herself between him and Ja-ja.

The wild man's form grew indistinct as he stood motionless, watching them depart.

Back through the treacherous bog and beneath the moss-hung branches of gum and cypress they picked their way. Even Paul heaved a sigh of relief as they finally mounted their ponies again.

"Well, Sona," said he, "I hardly expected to

be indebted to you for such an escape. If you had not been there, Ja-ja would have crushed me into a mummy. I felt it in the touch of his very finger tips. He is fearfully strong."

"I am glad I was there then. But those bears nearly scared the life out of me. What do you suppose made Ja-ja so angry with you, Paul?"

"I think father once used his riding-whip on him when Ja-ja was troublesome about something. Father met him somewhere in the swamps. He had sense enough to take me for a Roanoak, and to exercise his resentment accordingly—Indian fashion, as it were."

"What is that?" asked Sona suddenly.

Some one was crashing through the swamp at a great rate toward them, as they were threading the narrow trail that led to the open pine woods.

Paul was about to suggest a more rapid retreat, when Ja-ja's huge form burst into the path directly before them. His rifle was slung, and he held out his hand, with something in it, toward the two.

The lad would have taken the object; but Jaja drew back, shaking his head angrily.

"Gal take um. Ja-ja fergit it. Gal take um. Ja-ja go."

Then, placing a crumpled scrap of paper in Sona's hand, he wheeled and disappeared in the tangle of undergrowth bordering the path, and was seen no more.

The young cousins, under a mutual sense of apprehension, rode on at a gallop, nor paused until the dense wall of the swamp was left behind, and they entered the open, aisle-like spaces of the pines, where the sunset still radiated and the cherry sky looked down between the wide spaced tree-tops.

"What was it Ja-ja gave you?" asked Paul, while Sona smoothed out a piece of paper. "Is it another note?"

"Listen," said Sona, holding the paper close to her eyes.

"'I am not able to come as I wrote that I would. Ja-ja will be at the big oak every night till Miss Sona comes. He will have nothing to

do with meeting any one only Miss Sona. They are after me hard. I must get away for a few days. But if you still wish to hear what an injured man has to say for himself, I will be at the big oak two nights next new moon. Perhaps you can be there then. Old Ehrich has set the officers on me, I am sure. He wants me away. I know it. Don't forget. Big oak—sundown—I felt that he would hardly do to trust, and now two nights—next new moon.'

- "Poor fellow!" remarked Sona. "I am glad he has been able to get on the good side of Ja-ja. Even a wild man is better than no friends at all."
- "Do you really think he is being pursued by officers?"
- "I begin to think that brother Edgar is not far from right in his idea of the elder Ehrich, at least. How very cruel!"
- "I hardly think Jake knows of his father's doings."
- "No; I will not lose faith in Jacob. But what shall we say to father and the rest?"

Paul reflected a moment.

"Let us say that we strayed into the swamp, and had a time with the bears and Ja-ja. We need not mention anything about Gillis."

When they rode up to the front piazza of the Legare mansion, Mr. Legare was pacing up and down uneasily. He had worried himself into a state of mild irritability.

"This is nice work!" he exclaimed, as the two dismounted and a negro boy took the ponies around to the horse lot. "Where on earth have you two been? Edgar is just on the point of sending over to Roanoak Hall to see if you have turned up there. I've a notion to send you to bed supperless, both of you! Do you hear? Such doings are disgraceful!"

"Now, papa!" And Sona pulled Mr. Legare's bald head to a level with her own, despite his grumblings, and imprinted a warm kiss on either cheek. "We got into Towie Swamp, and —and we met a bear."

[&]quot;Bless us all! A bear?"

Mr. Legare appeared to be dazed with amazement.

"Two of 'em, Uncle Dick," corrected Paul.

"Two of them!" echoed Uncle Dick, helplessly. "Well—wh-what next? Did the bears show you the way home?"

"Of course not, papa. But old Ja-Ja, he unexpectedly made his appearance and—"

"Look here, child!" interrupted Uncle Dick, wrathfully. "Suppose you two draw off a little. Do you regard your father as an idiot?"

"Indeed, papa, we are telling you the truth.
We are not making game—are we, Paul?"

"Why, no! You see, Uncle Dick, there are some bears in Towie. Well, an old one, with her cub, came along and showed fight. I had only my pocket-knife. Then up comes Ja-ja, with that old gun of his, and pumps them full of lead. Ja-ja was then on the point of going for me, but Sona persuaded him out of the notion. He likes Sona, and he doesn't like me."

Uncle Dick fumed a little more, but his prevailing good nature asserted itself, and he dismissed the two with a gentle reprimand and a general admonition as to the dangers of the swamps and of remaining away too long.

When Edgar heard an account of the adventure, he smiled knowingly and said nothing. Later on, though, he took occasion to say to Paul, when the two were alone:

"You and Sona must have had some special errand to take you into the heart of Towie Swamp. What was it, anyhow?"

Paul's replies to this form of questioning were so confusing and evasive that Legare turned away, uttering a growl of contempt.

"You are a simpleton, Paul, for thinking me such a one as to swallow a put-up dose like that! I have no wish to pry into your and Sona's secrets. You are but children, as it is, but do not think that I am so easily deceived."

Legare turned away so quickly that Paul's reply died upon his lips. After all, the boy could have said but little to the purpose without giving himself away. This he would not do, for, like Sona, he had now come to feel that it would

savor of treachery to reveal anything about Gillis to one so determined to effect the convict's recapture as Legare had shown himself to be.

Meanwhile, over at Bugle Point, Mr. Ehrich had passed a number of anxious hours. For all that he knew, Gillis might have fulfilled his threat of going to Roanoak Hall and telling what he knew.

Later on, when Jake told his father what Sona had related to him in the woods, the elder Ehrich felt more anxious than ever. Under the stimulus of this feeling he wrote a note to the constable of the district, and dispatched it by Mose, a trusty negro, on horseback.

This was on the same afternoon that Paul and Sona went into Towie Swamp, but several hours earlier. Mose rode away briskly and fared very well, until he crossed a little log bridge over Pokatono Creek. The place was isolated and not far from Towie Swamp, where the creek had its rise. The dusky messenger was jogging along at a snail's pace on a plantation mule, singing:

"Some folks say de niggers won't steal, But I kotch seven in my co'n fiel'.

Run, nigger, run-patterol git yo'.

Run, nigger, run-hit's almost day.

Gi' me a pone an' a good ham bone-

"Lawd ha' mussy! Who dat cum dar?" A large man, in dingy convict garb, swung himself down from an overhanging limb and seized the bridle. The negro's teeth chattered.

"Got anything to eat about you?" demanded the man. "Shuck it out—tobacco and all. Lively, now!"

"Please, marse, I en't nuttin' cep'n dish yere twist er home-made. An' den—Laws! En't you one ere de convicts f'om down on Pocataligo?"

The man, with a scowl of vexation at the words and the messenger's dilatory movements, pounced on him like a hawk on a chicken. Mose dropped on his knees and began praying.

Gillis, for it was he, went through the negro's clothes the while. From an old haversack he extracted some bacon and cornbread, stolen, prob-

ably, from the Ehrich kitchen. In Mose's hat the convict found Ehrich's note.

"What's this?" asked Gillis.

Then his eye grew eager as he recognized the handwriting, with which he had become familiar in Charleston years back, before Ehrich took to being a country gentleman.

He ruthlessly tore open the envelope, regardless of Mose's protests, and his brow darkened as he read.

"So," muttered the miserable convict. "I did right not to trust the man, who, more than any one else, was the cause of my going to the pen. He is trying to put the officers on my track. See here, you rascal!"

Gillis seized Mose roughly.

He was off the mule and on his knees, but Gillis held him in a relentless grasp. The convict's eyes blazed with an expression that made the negro shudder and convulsed the other's face. Then it died away, and he flung poor Mose from him.

"After all," he said, "you are only the blind

instrument. Get up, you dog! Go back and tell Mr. Sidney Ehrich that if ever I get my hands on him, as I just had them on you, he will never live to tell of it!"

Then Gillis tore the note into minute fragments, stamped them into the mud, snatched up the haversack of eatables and plunged out of sight behind the thick fringe of trees and bushes that here lined the road on both sides.

Later on, when Gillis encountered old Ja-ja, whom he had met before in his forest wanderings, he persuaded the wild man to be the bearer of a message to Sona and Paul, explaining why he no longer dared to linger in the neighborhood, now that Ehrich was trying to put the officers on his track.

In a few days, when the first vigor of renewed search should relax, it might be safe for him to venture back in order to keep his second appointment.

In the meantime Mose, scrambling on his mule, rode pell-mell back to Ehrich himself, with

an exaggerated tale regarding the particulars of his hold-up.

This account so worked on Mr. Ehrich's fears that Sidney, notwithstanding the vigorous rebuff to which he had been subjected on the night of the convict's discovery by Jake, ventured to question his father again.

The mean, coarse nature of the deformed boy found something so congenial in certain kindred attributes in his parent, that the natural selfishness of his heart was vaguely disturbed. He missed his father's brusque cordiality, and even his rough methods of reproof.

"I say, dad, what's the matter with you, anyway?" began the lad, one day, as Mr. Ehrich sat glumly in his office at the works, with numerous neglected bills and letters on his desk. "Have you got a hit back from any one?"

Mr. Ehrich turned a heavy eye and a rather gray-looking face upon his pert son; then he rose, and, without a word, ejected Sidney junior with scant ceremony.

"Now, you get out!" said he, sternly. "If I

catch you nosing around here again to-day I will have you ducked in the bay!"

Sidney promptly made himself scarce.

"Look here, Jake," he said, meeting his brother out in the yard of the works, "dinged if I don't believe dad is going crazy! What's gone wrong?"

"Oh, nothing much," replied Jacob evasively, for he had been ordered by his father to say nothing to any one concerning the affair with the convict. "You mind your own business, and then you won't be so suspicious of what concerns your elders."

"Rats!" sneered Sid, cutting the word sharply. "I ain't no fool. You and father have got something up. I just know you are setting dad against me, and he always liked me best before. You can keep mum if you want to, but just you watch out. I'll find out what's up—see if I don't."

"Now see here, Sid. Don't be a ninny and make a nuisance of yourself. I'm not setting

father against you or any one. Why don't you ask him what the matter is?"

- "I did," answered Sid, glumly.
- "Well, what did he say?"
- "He said nix. He fired me out of the office. I think it is real mean. I like dad better than you do, with all your fine airs, and now he makes up to you, and gives me the go by."
- "It will blow over. Don't you fret. If you really like father, the best way for you to show it will be to say nothing, and do whatever you see that he would wish you to do."

Then Jacob walked to the office door and went in, closing it carefully behind him and leaving Sid staring sullenly, being quite unconvinced by Jacob's rather tritely correct logic.

Presently Sid stole to the door and softly tried the knob. As the office door opened into a short passage and was unconnected with the countingroom by this entrance, he was unobserved.

"It's locked," he said to himself; and a lump rose in his throat at the idea. "Dad locks himself in there with Jake, and he locks me out. It's tough on me, it is so! It's downright mean in both of them, especially dad."

Usually Sid was the reverse of sentimental, and was loud in his ridicule of Jake's tendencies in that direction. But now he found out all at once how fond he really was of his father by being suddenly shut out, as it were, where the derided Jake was admitted.

The tears he shed were mingled with resentment. To Sid, when baffled, the desire to get even was proportioned by his sense of deprivation.

"They needn't think they can out-do me," he thought, as he began to explore the surroundings of the office. "I'll find out what they are up to in spite of them—you bet I will!"

He brought in an empty ash barrel that was lying at the end of the passage, inverted it and climbed up stealthily. From his position, he could now look through the half-open transom over the door, and what suited him better still, overhear every word uttered by his father and Jacob.

"The fellow is undoubtedly very desperate," Mr. Ehrich was saying, as he leaned his head on his hand, at the desk. "Now that he has found out what I was sending that note to Simpson for, he may attempt my life. He may be lying in wait for me anywhere."

"Why should you try to have him recaptured?" asked Jacob.

"Because he will not trust me. He ran from us the other night. Next we heard he had gone to the Roanoaks. For all we know, he may have told them any number of lies about us. People here seem to like to believe things against me. I notice more offish looks than ever within the last few days."

"As long as we have really done no wrong, we can afford to put up with cross looks now and then, unpleasant as it may be."

Jacob's tone was sad, nevertheless, for he was thinking of Paul and Sona, and his baffled wishes regarding Editor Legare.

"I tell you we cannot afford to take any risks.

The only safety for us now is to have that fellow

shut up again. No one about the penitentiary will believe him. Around here, it is different. These stuck-up nabobs resent our coming among them from a pawn-shop in town. They can't make money themselves, yet they affect to despise those who can. Anything they can get hold of that may be twisted to our discredit, they will grab at quicker than a hungry mule will eat corn.'

"Still, father, as long as we have really done nothing that is discreditable, why need we care? Pawnbroking and selling second-hand goods may seem discreditable to them, but they need not seem so to us, as long as we acted honestly."

Though Jacob talked encouragingly enough, he was in reality wounding his own nature out of sympathy for his father. The boy had often wished that the Ehrichs were not so different from their neighbors; yet now he felt a compassion for his parent's fears, that was mingled with a fear of his own, that the past was not so morally clear as might be wished, where his

father was concerned; else, why had Gillis talked in such a horribly suggestive way?

Yet, for Jacob to plainly ask his father whether Gillis inferred a dishonorable truth or was merely lying, seemed to the sensitive youth a sort of filial breach of trust. Mr. Ehrich was his father, first of all. If anything lay hidden from him, let it remain hidden, unless the revealing of it were necessary to his father's safety.

"Of course we acted honestly," blustered Mr. Ehrich, with undue heat. "Who says we didn't?"

"Gillis seemed to infer that some one had done things which it would be well for him to say nothing about—well for you, I mean."

Jacob regretted this speech as soon as it was uttered. Mr. Ehrich's brow grew black, and his short, stiff hair seemed to bristle with anger.

"Hang it all!" he stormed. "I sent for you to obey me, and say nothing; and you only harp on the lies of a convicted scoundrel. Here! Get out! I've had enough of your sentimental remarks. If Sidney were two or three years older,

I wouldn't give him for a dozen of you; and that is a fact!"

While speaking, Mr. Ehrich rose and flung open the office door, thereby pushing over Sid and the barrel. While Mr. Ehrich stared at this discovery, Sid scrambled up and rushed into his astonished father's arms.

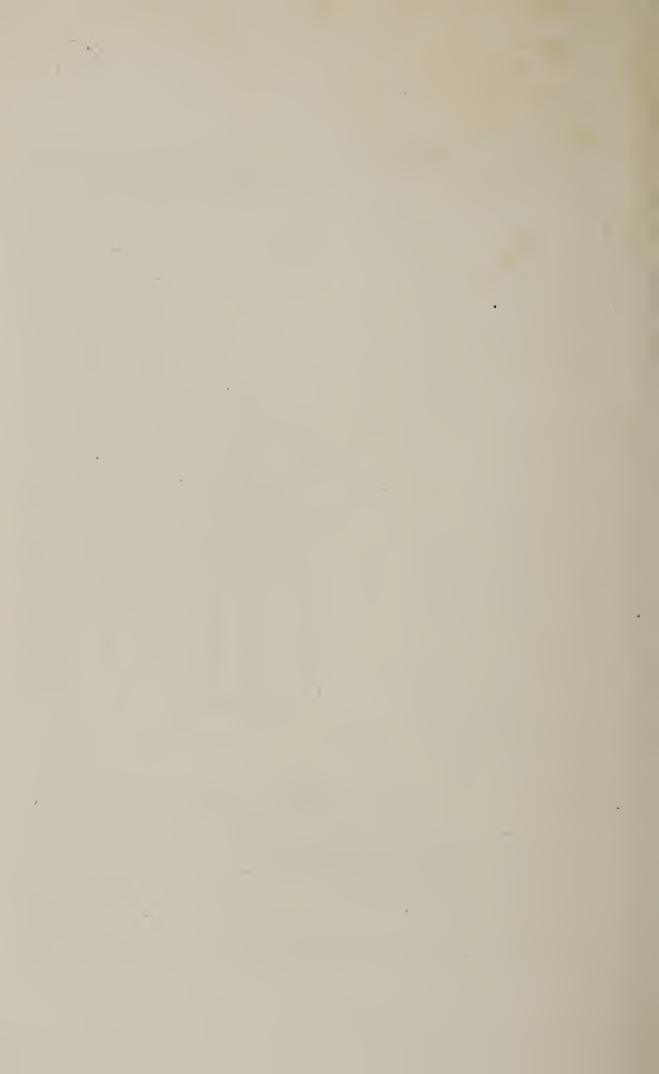
"Never mind, if I ain't old enough, dad," he cried. "Neither you nor Jakey can't fool me. Take me in, dad. I'll be worth more to you than Jake. If that sneak you're talking about and are so scared of, comes, I'll face him—see if I don't! I'll set the dogs on him. He shan't worry you no more, dad. Nor you won't treat me the way you have been doing—will you, dad?"

Mr. Ehrich's first impulse, to give Sid a thrashing for his eavesdropping proclivities, died away in a kindred feeling of pride in the boy's astuteness, and of gratitude at this show of affection. After all, the two were congenial spirits.

Jacob felt himself at once barred out. Had



Mr. Ehrich flung open the office door, thereby pushing over Sid and the barrel (Page 154)



he been spying instead of Sid, the thrashing would have been given, notwithstanding his seventeen years. But coarse, crafty, over-wise Sid could do anything, and then finally triumph.

The older son picked up his hat and walked out of the office, as the habitual melancholy of his handsome face deepened into a suggestion of pain and tears, that just then looked only womanish to the father, fresh with the pride of his second son.

"Keep your silly tongue still—do you mind?" he called after Jacob, as the latter passed through the passage.

Jacob heard the door shut, and he went on across the marshes to the house, feeling more depressed than ever. Any preference, or friendship, or ambition that had its fulfillment dependent on his relations with Paul, Sona or even Edgar Legare, might as well be given up.

He ordered his pony saddled, and presently rode away through the woods, more to kill time and fight down his rebellious mutterings of spirit than anything else. An hour's ride brought him in the neighborhood of a long, swamp-like hummock called Ashepoo Bend, where the echoing sound of running hounds reminded him that it was the day set for a general deer drive by the neighboring planters. The hunting season had not long opened.

"They carefully overlooked mentioning the matter to any of us," thought he, rather bitterly, "though last year we were notified every time the Edisto hummocks were hunted over. That only adds to the feeling that I have that we are purposely neglected now."

Jacob was at the lower end of the swamp. As the noise of the pack merrily grew in his ears, his sadness gave way to a thrill of excitement. He unslung the shotgun which the hostler had hung to his saddle as a matter of course, and stationed himself at what appeared to be a favorable stand.

"If a deer comes this way, I will take a shot, anyhow," he thought.

The "yow-yowing" of the hounds presently gave way to a smart chorus of barks that denoted the baying of some object.

"It cannot be a deer," he thought. "They seem to have treed something. Wonder what it can be?"

CHAPTER XII.

A QUEER HUNT-SONA REFUSES TO EXPLAIN.

Where Jacob had stationed himself was at the opposite end of the swamp from where the hounds had been put in. The hunters, divided on either side, had ridden along in accompaniment of the sound of the dogs, placing themselves at convenient stands from time to time, and thus traversing the boundary of the swamp lengthwise.

So it happened that none of them had arrived where Jacob was, as all were behind rather than before the course of the hounds. When the baying had continued for a brief space, sounds of a conflict were audible. Jacob, unable to restrain his impatience, rode into the hummock from the

open pine woods and made his way, where the earth was firm enough, toward the sounds of the melee.

As he drew nearer, his excitement increased. He urged his pony rather recklessly on, but was taken aback presently by hearing a shrill, feminine call for help suddenly rise above the canine uproar.

At this juncture his horse bogged and refused to flounder further in the mire.

Jacob sprang down and ran forward, with his whip in his hand. Thrusting himself through a rustling, rattling shield of saw-palmetto, he arrived in a small space where the undergrowth was sparse.

This was well filled with dogs of high and low degree—hounds, curs, beagles and others. They were swarming and leaping at no less an object than Gillis himself, who was pushing through the canine throng, holding before him the insensible form of a young girl.

Jacob's blood surged more fiercely than it ever had done before. The girl was Sona. The screams must have been Sona's. That she should be handled thus by the hunted convict was intolerable.

"Put her down!" he cried, raising his whip as he advanced.

To his surprise, Gillis made for him at once. He pushed Sona roughly into Jacob's arms, and, before the boy could say a word, exclaimed:

"There! I'm rid of her! Lucky for her I came in time. Bad for me, though."

He was off, striking right and left with a stout stick at the dogs, who now cowered beneath the vigor of his blows.

"Hold on!" cried Jacob, now more perplexed than enraged. "What are you doing here?"

But Gillis disappeared among the bushes, followed by all the dogs, except two or three that had been knocked over by the convict's stick. Jacob stood holding his precious burden, and wondering how it all had come about, when Sona began to show symptoms of reviving. At the same time several hunters, on foot and on horseback, appeared hurriedly through the tangle of

brake and brier that obscured the view on every side beneath the taller forest trees.

Among these were Paul Roanoak, Edgar Legare and Uncle Ham. The latter had been following the dogs on foot, and had just come up.

Jacob's face flushed, although he knew that his own actions were blameless. But to be caught holding Sona, just recovering from a swoon, by relatives who were disposed to think ill enough of him as it was, could not but discompose him somewhat.

The look of concern on Paul's face changed to wonder, then relief, and finally settled into a cautious reserve. Legare dismounted and came forward, his face set with anger.

"So," said he, "it was you, then, that were the cause of my sister's fright! Give her to me!"

But Sona drew away from them both, and looked around in puzzled wonder, that gave way to confusion as she saw so many men gazing

curiously at the scene of which she was the centre.

"What—why—where is the wildcat—and—the man?" she faltered, hesitatingly.

"Here are men enough, Sona," said her brother. "Did that fellow insult you?"

Jacob could not stand that. He drew back haughtily.

"I am not so much in the habit lately of giving as of receiving insults," retorted he, coldly. "Miss Sona knows that I would die rather than be the cause of anything unpleasant happening to her."

"Well, you must know that your company has not been sought after of late. But it is intolerable to find you annoying my sister in this way."

"Hi-yo!" exclaimed Uncle Ham, who had been rummaging among the bushes at a little distance. "Dat ar de biggest warmint I seed in many a day, en't hit?"

The old fellow was dragging a large wildcat that he had found. The creature's head was smashed in, as if by a blow from some heavy instrument. There was no sign of dog-bitcs, however.

- "Who could have killed this, I wonder?" asked Paul.
- "Now I remember," said Sona, submitting to Edgar's summons, and suffering herself to be led away from Jacob, who stood somewhat to himself. "You will find my pony somewhere in that palmetto clump, I think."
 - "Go on. What is it you remember?"
- "Don't be cross, Brother Ed. I couldn't help being nearest the dogs as they came by. The pony wouldn't go into the bog, so I ran in on foot."
- "Very imprudent for a girl to do." This from Edgar.
- "What is the use of a girl hunting if she can not be in at the death? The dogs were baying something, so I made my way in, and there was that wildcat in the fork of a sweet bay."
- "Dat's old Bounce's doin's," ejaculated Ham, indignantly. "I lay I w'ar dat hound out yit fo' leavin' a hot trail fo' varmint an' sech like."

"When the wildcat saw me it jumped. I don't know whether it meant to spring at me or the dogs. But I screamed, all the same. Then some one ran in, and I think must have killed the cat. I am ashamed to say I must have fainted. See where its claws tore my dress. That is all I know."

"You say some one ran in and killed the wildcat?"

"Yes. The dogs must have followed him after that, as the cat doesn't seem to show signs of being bitten."

Jacob was here conscious that eyes were being turned towards him in a more respectful, not to say relenting way.

"It was not I," said he. "I cannot lay claim to that glory. I never saw the wildcat alive."

Sona looked puzzled. She pondered a moment. Then, as her brow cleared, she looked at Jacob.

Some undefinable expression in her face appeared to appeal to him to reveal nothing. Per-

haps she was sorry for Gillis, if she had recognized him upon his first coming to her rescue.

Jacob felt sorry for the poor man himself, more especially since he became aware of the efforts that had been made to secure his recapture. Edgar began to be impatient.

"What a mystery about nothing!" he exclaimed. "Did you recognize the fellow who killed the wildcat, and, as I suppose, took charge of you?"

"I—I hardly know. Perhaps— You see, it was all so hurried."

"Sona, you are intentionally keeping something from us. There are things to be explained here, as you must well know."

Sona still looked undecided, but the next utterance of Edgar's made her rebellious.

"Shall I have to require an explanation from this person here?" alluding to Jacob.

"Edgar, you are too provoking! I shall explain nothing more. Jacob can say what he thinks best; only, he was not here when I fainted. And I feel sure that Jacob has done

no harm whatever to me or any one else. There, now!"

And Sona walked away in search of her pony in a very dignified manner.

Mr. Legare turned to Jacob.

"Do you know what happened here that my sister declines to explain?" he demanded.

The memory of Edgar Legare's haughty manner was too strong in Jacob to frame his reply in a way that might soften wrath.

"Whether I know or not, you may be sure that as long as Miss Sona remains silent, you will get nothing out of me. Good-day, gentlemen. I should not have been here but for hearing the dogs as I was passing."

With bitterness at heart, Jacob was moving back towards his own horse, when, as he passed Paul, the latter said, in a low voice:

"I am sorry, Jacob, that there must be coolness between us. But it cannot be helped, I fear. I don't think you are to blame, though."

"What am I not to blame for?" said Jacob, quickly.

Just then back came the dogs in a confused mass, as if they had either been driven back, or had lost trail of what they were after.

Paul said something, but the clamor around drowned his words. Jacob went on, mounted his horse and rode away at a breakneck pace.

He might have gone a mile, though he was hardly conscious of the direction or duration of his course, when a man sprang out of a clump of palmetto bordering the roadside, and grasped his bridle-rein.

"Let go there!" commanded Jacob, as his pony nearly fell back on his haunches under the suddenness of the jerk at the bits.

CHAPTER XIII.

JACOB HEARS A TALE—MR. EHRICH OWNS UP—AT
THE OLD SHELL MOUND.

It was Rad Gillis. Before Jacob could say more, the convict placed his hand on the young fellow's shoulder.

"Let me talk, Jake," said he. "I'm close pushed now, but I want you to let it be known that I was not harming the girl. I killed that wildcat. The dogs had bayed it, and as she came up it sprang at her, just as I, attracted by the noise, happened along. You see, I thought the hounds might have a deer, and I need food. It was a risky move, for I knew the hunters were not far away."

"I know. Miss Sona remembered enough to clear you of any blame. Indeed, only she and I know it was you. I feel certain she won't tell who you were, unless she sees a way for the news to do you good, and I am sure you have nothing to fear from me."

"Is that so, Jake?"

Gillis eyed the youth closely.

"I know why you are suspicious, Rad. But, really, I had nothing to do with what father or any of them may have done about trying to have you recaptured. Indeed, I think such work utterly mean, although the law may say it is right. You acted the part of a brave and true man today, Rad, and I feel sure that Miss Sona realizes it as well as I."

The hunted man grasped Jacob by the arm, and looked piercingly into the boy's eyes. Then he heaved a sigh of evident relief.

"Jake, I believe you. The other night I should have waited for you at the wharf, had it not been for that boat. When I saw it, I remembered

how tricky your father was, and I bolted without taking second thought."

"Well, what can I do for you? If things are as you intimate that they may be, perhaps you are not so much to blame."

"All I am to blame for is in being too compliant. Your father and your Uncle Hiram know. But it is useless to appeal to them. Did I not overhaul the negro bearing your father's note to the constable? I am to be hunted down again. They have been hot on my trail ever since. But for old Ja-ja, who knows the swamps, I would have been taken before now."

"What are you going to do next?"

"Either get a pardon or skip, providing I can get money. Say, Jake, I have tried twice to get the ear of the Roanoaks in order to blow on Sidney and Hiram Ehrich, but both times I failed. The squire would not listen. The second time I was prevented from keeping my appointment with Paul. I doubted you all then. But now—I don't know. I hate to bring trouble on you, Jake, now that you stood up for me as you did

to-day. What do I care for the Roanoaks, any-how? Why should I interpose between them and Mr. Sidney Ehrich?"

"What has my father done, Rad?" asked Jacob, his heart beating fearfully, though he hardly realized why.

"I cannot tell you here." Gillis looked nervously up and down the road. "It is too public a place. Here is what I will do, Jacob. First, though, you must bring me one hundred dollars. Can you do that?"

"I should have to ask father for it. Why do you insist on so large an amount?"

"To enable me to get away. If you tell your father what you want it for, he will let you have it quick enough. Do not fear. He wants me away. Only two courses are open to me, outside of giving myself up. Either I must tell all I know to Paul, or you must get me away."

"I will not knowingly do wrong, Rad. You must tell me all—all, mind—that you intended to tell the Roanoaks. Then I shall decide what I had better do. If you have been wronged by

my father, I will try to right the wrong. But only the greatest necessity will make me feel like condoning what is wrong myself. I don't claim to be a saint, Rad, yet I desire to do the square thing all round when I can."

"Come into this hummock with me. It is risky for me to linger here, but if you must know everything before you will decide, why, the quicker you know all the better."

Gillis again seized Jacob's bridle-rein, and, notwithstanding the boy's faint protest, drew the pony aside into a thick bunch of cabbage and saw-palmetto, that closed behind them like a curtain.

An hour or more might have elapsed, then Jacob emerged on his pony, and rode thoughtfully towards home. Gillis was not visible.

That night, after the rest of the family had retired, Jacob entered the library where his father was busy over some business correspondence. The boy sat down, but remained silent. His sensitive features were set in an expression of sombre resignation, and he stared at the small

"light wood" fire in the grate, as if his thoughts were deep in despondency. Finally Mr. Ehrich threw down a vexing letter, and uttered an impatient exclamation:

"Hang 'em! They shall pay the bill, if it takes the last cent they have—hello! That you, Jake? Why don't you go to bed?"

"I saw Rad Gillis to-day, father," said Jacob, ignoring the parental inquiry.

"The dickens you did!" Mr. Ehrich, eyeing his son, sharply, was struck by the air of mingled sadness and resolution expressed by the young man's face and manner. "Has he been captured? Did Simpson have the handcuffs on?"

"No. I don't know anything about Simpson. Gillis is free, so far. I saw him twice, father."

"Well-did you try to stop him, or tell others where he was?"

"No, I did not. He saved Sona Legare's life, in all probability. That was when I saw him first." Jacob then briefly related what had happened at Ashepoo Bend. "No one but Miss

Sona and I know who it was, and we are not going to tell."

"Indeed! This is a fine way to do. I suppose next you will be believing any put-up tales Gillis chooses to tell you. You might even want to help him expose others with his lies, or even get clear away, himself."

Notwithstanding his sneering incredulity of tone, Mr. Ehrich shrank from meeting squarely the grave, clear look of his elder son, that remained, throughout the interview, fixed on his father.

"When I saw Gillis the second time," continued Jacob, without noticing his father's remark, "he told me everything—everything."

In spite of his bravado and assurance, Mr. Ehrich felt the blood receding from his face. So plain a tale as Gillis could tell bore the intrinsic evidence of truth within itself. He saw, without a word further, that his son believed what he had heard; and at the same time he felt the inefficacy of scoffing or denunciatory denial on his own part. The older man—shrewd as he

was—remained silent. Even his eyes slowly sank.

Jacob sighed deeply.

"Gillis says that you hold possession of the Bugle Point place wrongfully. You and Uncle Hiram bought it at a tax sale during the carpetbag times. The Roanoaks tried to buy it back under an old law that allows State granted land to be redeemed within a certain time. He said that he stole the old Roanoak State grant from the court-house and gave it to you and uncle. He was able to do this at that time because, through a friend who was employed in the record clerk's office, he had surreptitious access to the documents in the county safe."

Mr. Ehrich, after a last blaze of wrathful derision, had gradually collapsed in his chair. His son regarded him sadly, and again sighed.

"Lastly Gillis says that you and uncle must have that old deed in your possession yet. He said you feared to destroy it, as that would be a felony in the eyes of the law, while for the simple theft from the county archives he alone is responsible. Your merely retaining it being—
if such were exposed—a less legally important
crime. He said that you and uncle secured a
hold over him by threatening to give him up for
a crime that he had committed for your benefit.''

"That is a lie, Jake. I pledge you my word I did not know he was going to take the deed until the thing was done. Hiram showed it to me. That was the first I knew. So help me gracious, it's so, Jake!"

"Did Uncle Hiram alone put Gillis up to take the deed?"

Mr. Ehrich was silent. Jacob went on:

"At any rate, you—we all, in fact—have profited by what Gillis did. But for that the Roanoaks would have redeemed the place by paying you and uncle for all you had done and paid out, and the place would have been theirs again. The records having been destroyed during the war, it is evident that with the disappearance of the old original deed, their claim—so far as power

to redeem the land lay—was of no value. This was all bad enough, father, but it is not all."

"You believe a convict—a fellow in stripes—before your own father. Go on! I will not be surprised if you fix it up that Hiram and I cooked up a forgery to get Rad in the pen. But there is a screw loose in his tale there, if he told you so. Why did he not tell long ago about our having the deed? That would have been a good way to get revenge—eh, Jake?"

"Because, as he says, a knowledge of that fact by the authorities would probably have led to another trial, or, at least, to an increase of sentence. He dreaded that; so he forebore. But now that he has escaped, and finds you doing all that you can to get him back in the pen again, he vows that you and uncle shall suffer, if he has to stay behind the bars all the balance of his days; that is, if you don't help him off."

Mr. Ehrich stared at the fire. In its flickering glow he seemed to see flitting pictures of toiling convicts and armed guards. He even fancied that certain faces there resembled his own and his brother's. Then he shuddered and looked at his son in such a pitifully beseeching manner that Jacob felt a shock.

It seemed an almost unnatural reversal of their mutual relations that his usually strong, bold, shrewd father should be offering dumb appeals for forbearance to his own son.

"Father, I think of you first of all, and—and mother and the rest." Jacob's voice trembled. "You have been good to us. Gillis only wants to get away. We can help him. In that case I have his assurance that he will not try to harm any of us any more. I think that it is very good of him; for, though he has done wrong himself, he has been greatly wronged in turn. He has suffered fearfully. Think how he has suffered, father."

"Anything—anything, Jake! If he will go off and do nothing against Hiram or me or any of us, I will help him all I can. I must include Hiram, you know, Jake."

"All right. But I have one stipulation to

make. If Gillis goes off, and things go right, we must give up Bugle Point."

"Wha-a-t?"

Mr. Ehrich rose from his chair in great excitement.

Then the worried, shame-stricken man sank back and hung his head low between his shoulders.

Jacob continued:

"In making things right, father, we must do our part. You know—I know that we have no right to retain this place, no matter if the Roan-oaks cannot show the deed. It is not their fault, but ours, that they have it not. If they still wish to redeem the place by paying whatever is due, we must give them the chance."

"It is not necessary. With Gillis out of the way, we can hold to what we have, in spite of these haughty Roanoaks. Besides, I don't believe that they can pay up, anyhow."

"They must have every chance to try. We must give it up, because it is the only honest, honorable way to do. Oh, father, what have we

gained by a wrongful course? These planters all despise us, notwithstanding our money and our place. I had rather live in a log cabin, and feel that we had done right, than live here the way things are now."

Mr. Ehrich leaned back and surveyed his son as if he had discovered something entirely new in him.

- "Jake! Jake!" he said, half sadly, "you ought to have been the son of a real gentleman. I don't hardly understand."
- "I had rather be the son of an honest man. I don't mind work myself, providing I can choose the kind of work I am to do."
- "I don't know. I have always been used to holding on to all I get. But for that we would be poor enough to-day. I don't think I can give up Bugle Point. Think of the works."
- "You must do it, father. I know mother would think as I do if she knew. As for Sid—"
- "Sid understands me better than you. Sid would say as I say."
 - "I cannot help that. Gillis will have nothing

to do with you, only through me. You don't know where to find him. I do. You must agree to let the Roanoaks redeem the place if they can. The deed can be restored in some way, without compromising any one."

"Suppose I refuse, Jake?"

"Then I shall at once leave home, and make my own living somewhere else. I know you will laugh at the idea; but I can work, and I won't steal."

Despite his coarse fibre, Mr. Ehrich winced at this unconscious cut of the moral lash. Jacob saw his father's shame.

"Forgive me!" he pleaded. "I was thoughtless or I would not have said that. But, dear father, please do what I entreat you to do."

"Well, well, I suppose I must. What is it I am to do for Gillis?"

Mr. Ehrich spoke with sudden weariness.

Jacob drew his chair close and placed his hand in that of his father, that remained limp and unresponsive.

Then the boy told what had been agreed on

between Gillis and himself. The older man briefly assented.

"He will want the money in gold, I suppose?" suggested he.

"Yes. I am to meet him to-morrow; then we will arrange a plan of getting him clear away. It may not be legally right to do this, but I feel sure that, taking all things into account, it is the only way to do and cause the least suffering to the innocent, as well as to those who may be to blame."

An open safe stood in the corner. From this Mr. Ehrich took out one hundred dollars in gold. Then he hesitated, with the coin in his hand and his fingers on the combination knob. After a minute he added two twenty-dollar gold pieces to the chosen amount, and thrust the whole into his son's hands.

"Gillis will appreciate good measure now," he said. "Tell him I rely on his doing his part as well as we shall do ours." As Jacob was leaving the room his father shook his head dubiously. "Jake is right, I reckon. He means

well; but I don't think Sid would be for giving up everything so easily. I fear it is a bad move. Then, what will brother Hiram say?''

Bright and early the next morning Jacob was riding across Edisto to the ferry connecting with the mainland, where the swamps were more extensive and the chance for hiding out altogether better.

The ferry was a barge-like affair, that was pulled from shore to shore along a steel wire tautly stretched overhead. A mile or two further on, the road entered a long causeway across a bit of swamp land. There was firmer ground in the interior of the swamp, with sundry trails branching out on either hand. Jacob took one of these for perhaps half a mile. Then he was compelled to leave his pony, owing to the miriness of the ground.

He tied the animal in a thick clump of shrubbery, and pushed on afoot, bearing a satchel in one hand and a stout walking stick in the other.

Vast cypresses, and gum, and magnolias made almost a twilight gloom around and overhead.

Black, treacherous-looking sloughs filled the hollows between the trees, out of which sprang noisome and rank weeds and bushes.

Foul odors permeated the air, and under the morning sun, yellow mists arose like steam, suggestive of ghostliness and malaria. From under an occasional tussock, or at the edge of dark red pools of stagnant water, crept the water-moccasin, rusty-looking, wary and deceptive, added to which the cry of crane or bittern, the croaks of frogs and the hum of mosquitoes wore upon the ear with a sense of irritation.

Jacob was glad when he at length arrived at a cluster of seven unusually tall cabbage-palmetto trees that towered into prominence from the summit of an old shell mound.

He consulted his watch, then, placing his fingers to his mouth, imitated the "bob white" call of the Southern quail three times in succession.

After a long pause, he was renewing the signal, when old Ja-ja, accompanied by Gillis, sud-

denly appeared from a labyrinth of gallberry bushes that flanked the mound on one side.

The savage-looking old negro squatted down at a distance, giving no heed to Jacob other than to watch him keenly with a pair of small, beady, black eyes. As he squatted, he cut off slices from the edible bud of a cabbage-palmetto, eating it raw and with zest.

"Howdy, Jake!" said Gillis, affably. "I see you are still true blue and on time. Have you got the needful?"

"There is more money than you stipulated for, Rad," replied Jake, placing the gold in the convict's hand that closed on the yellow metal greedily. "I hope you are still in the same notion you were in yesterday."

"Yes. Rad Gillis does not go back on his word, no matter what others have done. But the feel of this gold makes a new man of me. It enables me to get away. D'ye hear, Jake? No more toil knee deep in mud and water, with a guard and a Winchester always handy. No

more stripes or paddling now. I hope you brought the clothes, Jake."

Jacob handed Gillis the satchel, into which the hunted man glanced with satisfaction.

"That is all right, Jake. We did not say much about clothes, but I knew you would not forget. And now, I have thought of a plan—the safest plan all around for me to get away. You know you have a good sailboat. We once spoke about her. Well, I will lay low with Jaja here for a week. That is the time the Havana mail steamer, that calls at Charleston, is due. By keeping quiet, the heat of the pursuit will then be over, you know."

- "I am sure I hope so. Then what?"
- "You remember where I jumped into your boat the night I first saw you? On the island, near Loon Beach and the inlet?"
- "Yes; but is not that rather an exposed hiding place?"
- "Possibly; but the good point about it is that no one will think of looking for me there. Should any one happen to land, I can skip over

to one of the other islets. Among the rocks and scrub I shall be safe. If it rains, it will be tough; but I can endure anything for the sake of liberty. Sure, Jake, that your father will stick?"

"Yes. He knows what to do now."

Jacob could not bring himself to say that selfinterest would secure his father's faithfulness, though he knew it well enough.

"Well, so long, Rad. I had better not be seen in these parts too often. One week from to-day I will look you up at the place agreed on. When you see me coming over in the Sylph, you must be ready to jump aboard. I will put you on the steamer outside the bar. Should the wind be fair, I may be on hand rather early."

After a few more words Jacob took his leave, and had reached the bottom of the mound when he heard a warning exclamation. Turning, he saw Gillis running toward him at full speed. Old Ja-ja had already disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT THE STEAMBOAT LANDING-IN CHARLESTON.

When Gillis came up he said, hurriedly, without pausing in his gait:

"There are some parties on the other side of the mound. I just glimpsed them in time to skip. If they see you, simply take things easy, and don't let on."

Then the convict wheeled and buried himself in the bushes, just as two armed men on horse-back appeared at the summit of the mound. They scrutinized the footprints there; then they saw Jacob leisurely riding away. Putting spurs to their horses, they rode down and intercepted the youth.

"What are you doing here?" asked one, in a rather peremptory tone.

"What business is it of yours?" replied Jacob. "I know of no reason why you should meddle with my affairs."

"Look here, boy," began the man, blusteringly, when his companion interposed, more mildly.

"Let me talk, Peters. My young friend, we are after an escaped convict. We have authority to question and to search—if need be. You look like a good boy. I hope you will be frank in what you say."

Jacob's heart thrilled a little at the words, "escaped convict," but he retained his composure."

"Give me a description of the man, and I can tell you whether I have seen or heard anything to the point."

"Five feet, ten inches tall," read the man from a paper which he drew from his pocket. "Stout and muscular, will weigh one hundred and seventy pounds. Is active, daring and plausible."

All this would apply to Gillis.

Jacob thought an instant, then interrupted the officer with the query:

"White or black?"

"Black, of course. There was a white prisoner out a month back, but he has skipped the State before this, no doubt."

Jacob heaved a sigh of relief. Rightly or wrongly, he had grown to sympathize with the woes of Gillis, whose sins were so deepty shared by others. These words also assured him that the penitentiary officials had not heard of the recent movements of Gillis; therefore, it would be the easier to manage safely the plan the two had mutually agreed upon.

"Now, look here," said Jake, with assumed impatience. "Do you think I've got nothing else to do than run after such birds as that? I don't know anything about your man, and, what is more, I don't want to know anything. Goodmorning. I am in a hurry."

"Can't help it. Queer place, this, for a boy to be in a hurry. What might be your business over here, anyhow?"

"I—I—confound it! Let me pass! I am Jacob Ehrich, and it's nothing to you what I am up to."

"Oh, yes it is!"

One man laid hold of Jacob's bridle.

They were in a narrow place, where the gall-berries and palmetto clustered thickly. Jacob was angry, yet he felt powerless. He should have allayed suspicion, instead of exciting opposition. But before anything further occurred old Ja-ja burst through the bushes, his eyes gleaming wildly, and the numerous little tails into which his kinky hair was woven standing out stiffly in every direction.

Without noticing Jacob, he darted under the smaller pony ridden by one officer, and suddenly raised himself, Samson-like. Surprising as it may seem, horse and rider rose in the air on the brawny wild man's shoulders. Then, with one surge on the part of Ja-ja, both were flung

into the bushes like a sack of grain. As he did this, Ja-ja uttered such a soul-searching scream that the other ponies bolted, wild with fright.

Jacob's horse ran along the path, while the one ridden by the officer plunged into a bog almost immediately. By the time he had checked his own horse Jake was alone. At a distance he could hear the calls and objurgations of the baffled officials, but nothing of Ja-ja, who had promptly disappeared after effecting this diversion in Jacob's favor.

"I had better get away while things are favorable," he thought, and accordingly made good speed for the next half hour or so.

As he began to feel safe from further trouble from the officers, the comic side of the affair struck his fancy, and he laughed long and heartily at the remembrance of the struggling pony and the amazed man, as both mounted upward on Ja-ja's shoulders.

"I shall always like that negro after this," he thought. "I wager he is the only one around

here that could do such a feat. Ha! ha! ha! It was as good as a circus."

When he reached home Jake found that his father had left suddenly for Charleston. This news disturbed him greatly, especially as his mother could not enlighten him as to the object of this unlooked-for trip.

"He said he must see brother Hiram," said Mrs. Ehrich, "and for us not to look for him back until we saw him arrive."

Knowing his father as well as he did, Jacob could not help suspecting that this consultation with his brother might result unfavorably to the plan already outlined in reference to Bugle Point and Radnor Gillis. He spent an uneasy day and night. The next afternoon he sailed over to the steamboat landing in the Sylph; but his father was not among the passengers returning from town.

Jake lingered about the wharf in an aimless manner until the time was at hand for the steamer to start back on her return trip to Charleston. Then up drove Paul Roanoak, Edgar Legare and Sona, in a crazy-looking rattletrap of a carriage, driven by Uncle Ham, who officiated as family coachman for the squire on occasion.

The whistle blew as they hurried by where Jacob was standing, at the bow of his pretty little dory that lay moored to a wharf-post. Young Ehrich gravely raised his hat to Sona, who bowed politely. Tegare eyed Jacob without other sign of recognition, while Paul nodded slightly.

"They want to cut me," sighed the boy, as he hoisted his boat-sail. "And they hardly know how to begin. Hang it! why should I care—now?"

The gang-plank was hauled in, and the steamer, churning the water into foam with her great stern wheel, drew out into the channel as the Sylph shot forward under a brisk northerly breeze, her sail trimmed close, and the burnished copper showing on her weather side, as she heeled over to leeward.

Jacob sat high up on the starboard side, one

hand on the tiller, and the other holding the main sheet.

He presented a handsome and manly picture as he dexterously held the Sylph to her course, giving her all the pressure she would bear, while the water boiled and hissed against the port gunwale, as it threatened, yet never quite reached the top of the washboard.

"I think I must take back what I said concerning Jake Ehrich's being no sailor," remarked Paul to Sona, as they watched the Sylph draw away from the clumsy steamer.

"I did not know you had said anything of the kind. I am sure he seems to understand boat-sailing."

"Well, if I did not say it, I thought it, and perhaps that is as unjust. Jake must be practicing a good deal."

Presently the Sylph sheered more to the left as she entered the channel leading to the West Cut, and the steamer churned her way past John's Island, then up the channel leading into the main estuary that flows past Fort Sumter. Night had fallen when the three put up at a hotel that is largely frequented by Sea Islanders when in town.

After breakfast the next morning Paul started out to attend to some business for his father. Legare boarded at the hotel. Sona would remain there with her brother for several days. On the pavement Paul was called from the upper portico as he was about to walk away.

It was Sona drawing on her gloves.

"On second thought, I will go part way with you, Paul, if you don't mind. I want to do some shopping."

So Paul waited patiently through the period—always wearying to masculine minds—while Sona finished "primping" for the street. She came down the ladies' stairway, girl-like, two steps at a time in her haste.

"Is my hat on straight, Paul? I scarcely took time to look in the glass. You boys are always in such a hurry."

"Straight as a trigger."

Paul had hardly looked, but was fixing his eyes on a man down the street.

"You didn't even glance at me," pouted Sona; but she was reasonable, and added, "I think, though, it will do. Who on earth are you looking at, Paul?"

"That is Hiram Ehrich, Sidney Ehrich's older brother. See—he has gone into a doctor's office. Who would think such a dried-up, leathery-looking being would ever be sick?"

"Don't be uncharitable. Perhaps some member of his family is ill."

"I hope the doctor will make him pay a rousing big bill. Every time I see him or his worthy brother, I think of the way they euchred us out of Bugle Point, and it makes me mad. Jake is the only decent one of the family. Even he is a little tarred with the same stick, I fear."

"You shall not abuse Jacob. I always liked him in spite of his folks. Look, Paul. Old Hiram and the doctor are coming out in an awful hurry. There they go round the corner."

"Must be a case of fits or something. Well,

Sona, here is where you turn off into the shopping region. I'm off to see father's factors, then I've got to go to bank. Father wants money, but I'm afraid we won't get what he wants. We are always wanting money nowadays."

"So are we. If it was not for Edgar I don't know what papa would do. Where shall we lunch, Paul?"

"At Lombardi's. Meet you there at one sharp."

The two separated. Paul busied himself by running here and there on his father's affairs. He met certain young fellows of his own age in certain offices, whom he had known at school or elsewhere. At one o'clock he turned into Lombardi's well-known restaurant, and waited at a convenient table for Sona.

Presently she came in and greeted him with a rather serious and preoccupied air. Her order was given mechanically, and to some nonsense of Paul's she gave so little heed that he began to wonder. "What is the matter, Sona?" he asked, at length. "Could you not find your way about all right? Or did you fail to match any of those samples Aunt Europa is forever giving you when you run up to town?"

"Don't be silly, Cousin Paul." Sona fixed her eyes earnestly on the boy's face. "I heard a piece of sad news as I came along. At least it seems like bad news to me when I think of Jacob."

"What riddle is this?"
Paul spoke a little impatiently.

CHAPTER XV.

PAUL BEARS A LETTER—UNCLE HIRAM TALKS—

BACK TO BUGLE POINT—GILLIS APPEARS.

Sona leaned forward across the table.

"You know what a rugged-looking man Mr. Sidney Ehrich is. Well, as I was passing the corner of Church Street, I heard one man say to another that Mr. Ehrich was dead."

"That was close to Hiram Ehrich's store," said Paul. "I wonder where and how he died?"

"I don't know. Doesn't it seem awfully sudden, Paul? I know our people didn't like the Ehrichs much, but it makes me feel sad."

Paul knew that Sona, like himself, was thinking more about the effect of this news on Jacob. He now acknowledged to himself that he was

real sorry for Jacob, although it was hard to separate Jacob from his family, when Paul's thoughts turned in that direction.

After their luncheon they went to Legare's office, and Paul bade him good-by, as it was nearly time for the boat to start. Sona accompanied him to the dock. On the way, old Hiram Ehrich passed, went on board and handed a letter to the captain.

"If you see Jacob," said Sona, as she bade Paul farewell, "try and show him some sympathy. After all, he is not to blame for what his father has done."

"I suppose not; yet he feels its effect, for he enjoys the benefit of it all."

"I dare say, if Jacob had his way he would do what is right. I always felt that he was a gentleman. Yes, Paul—don't smile."

"If I smiled, it was because I think Jake lucky in having such a defender. I shall try and be civil when he and I meet."

When the steamboat reached the landing near

Waccamaw, the captain looked anxiously about the almost deserted wharf.

Paul was the only passenger who got off there, and him the captain approached with a letter.

"See here, Roanoak," said he, "cannot you get this over to Ehrichs' at once? They are neighbors of yours. I thought some of their negroes would be here—they usually are. But there isn't a soul I can trust. It is very important. Ehrich died of apoplexy this morning. I don't suppose his family have heard a word yet."

"What a shock it will be!" Paul was startled, for it had not occurred to him before that some one must take to them the news. "There is no wire down here, and I suppose this letter will be their first intimation as to what has happened."

"Right you are. I am going on down to Lower Edisto, and when I get back some of the family will want to go up. So there is no time to lose. Will you take it over?" Paul would gladly have dodged the duty, but as he looked round, he saw absolutely no one but himself to whom so important a missive could safely be entrusted.

"Yes," he said. "I ought to be willing to do this much for any one. I will see that it goes over to Bugle Point without delay. How soon will you be back?"

"In about three hours. Tell them not to be late if they want to go to town with me."

The captain returned on board, and Paul walked off rapidly as the steamer puffed her way down toward Lower Edisto.

The boy's plan was to send old Ham or some other servant to Ehrichs' as soon as he arrived at Roanoak Hall. But, as he walked along, his pity for the afflicted family grew. Would it not look more decent—not to say neighborly—to go over himself. In the presence of illness or death, the ordinary likes or dislikes of people ought to be subordinated to the requirements of the occasion.

So it came about that when he reached the

East Cut, instead of turning off to the Hall, he paddled across to Waccamaw Island, and hurried over to the shore opposite the Ehrich wharf.

Here he suddenly remembered there was no way to cross except by wading. He sat down on a log to draw off his boots, without hesitating. Then he abruptly stopped.

Some one was crossing the narrow marsh to the wharf. It was Jacob. Paul shouted and waved the letter. Then he sat down to wait, while Jacob, wondering not a little, rowed across in his dory.

"How are you?" greeted Paul, with a cordiality inspired by a sympathy that was now both sincere and unreserved. "I have a letter the captain wanted me to bring to you. So I—so I thought I—I would come at once."

"Is it from father?" began Jacob.

Then he noticed the unusual gravity of Paul's face and manner, and stopped.

Taking the letter, he was about to open it, but hesitated.

"It is for mother, and it is in Uncle Hiram's handwriting. I thank you, Paul, for being so kind as to fetch it yourself. It seems singular that father did not write."

While Jacob looked at the letter as if debating whether he had better open it or not, Paul, surveying him, felt a great compassion spring up within him, that utterly did away with all reserve on his part.

"Jacob," said he gently, "perhaps you had better open it yourself. At any rate, you ought to know what has happened as soon as possible."

Jacob gave one glance into Paul's eyes, then he fell to trembling.

"Don't keep me waiting!" he cried. "Is it about father?"

Paul could not keep the tears from his own eyes. He dashed them aside, then held out his hand.

"I am so sorry," he began. "Brace up, Jacob. Your—your father is—"

"Not dead?" interrupted young Ehrich, with startling vehemence.

Paul bowed his head, and Jacob clasped his hands, looking upward with still dry eyes.

"Did he do it, I wonder—did he do it?" he whispered, as if unconscious of Paul's presence.

He was wondering, even then, if his father had taken steps with Uncle Hiram to render ineffectual his promise to Jacob of restoring Bugle Point to its former owners.

Then he sighed, and finally burst into tears. Paul, though rather surprised at this way of receiving such news, consoled Jacob as best he could, and told all he knew, which was not much, beyond the mere fact of hearing of Mr. Ehrich's death.

Then, as Jacob did not suggest it, he refrained from going further when young Ehrich re-entered his dory.

"Good-by," said Paul. "I am awfully sorry, Jacob. No matter what our families may have thought of each other, we should only feel kindly at such a time. If I can help you in any way, let me know."

Jacob thanked him in a mechanical way as he turned homeward.

When Paul informed his father of the event, the old squire merely remarked, to Aunt Europa:

"If he had died several years sooner, we might have saved our Edisto plantation. Hang it! What is the use of my caring for the fellow's death when I see his dredges scooping up all the phosphates that should be ours?"

"Father!" exclaimed Paul, somewhat shocked.

Aunt Europa merely elevated her eyebrows. She was not partial to the Ehrichs herself, especially when they would not remain in their own proper station, though what that station was she hardly knew, only it did not seem right for such people to invade Edisto and remain there.

When the steamer returned from Lower Edisto, Jacob, his mother and young Sidney were

waiting at the wharf. That night, in Charleston, Jacob and his Uncle Hiram sat together in the room next to where all that was mortal of Sidney Ehrich senior lay in solemn state.

"Did father say anything to you, uncle, as to what he wanted done about—about the Bugle Point property?" asked Jacob, at length.

Then he waited in great suspense for an answer.

Hiram Ehrich, a dry, elderly, weazened-faced man, who loved a dollar as he did his life, lifted up his eyebrows in surprise.

- "No. Why should he? The place is all safe now—all safe now. You will have a fine property, Jacob."
 - "Who-I? How is that, uncle?"
- "He was a good father. He took me to our lawyer yesterday, not two hours before he was seized. Then he added a codicil to his will."
- "What was it? That is what I want to know. About what he wanted done? Isn't it singular he should alter his will just now?"
 - "It looks as if he almost expected something

would happen. But, then, your father was always altering something."

"What makes you think I will have a fine property, then?"

"That lawyer, Mr. Esmond, was in here after the news of Sidney's death got out. He said, as he left, that you would have a fine property. That is all I know. Your father did not let me read the codicil, though I signed as one of the witnesses."

"Was not that a little strange, uncle?"

"To be sure it was. It seemed to me almost unkind, considering that we have worked together all our lives. I saw that something was on his mind, yet I asked no questions."

But the day after the funeral, when the will was read by Mr. Esmond, the question that mingled so persistently with Jacob's grief for his parent's death was answered. There were bequests of various kinds to the widow and other relatives, bearing various dates. Uncle Hiram was remembered with a mourning ring and the bestowal of his brother's interest in certain

town property. Not once was Jacob's name mentioned, until the codicil, bearing date three days before, was prosaically droned off by the methodical lawyer. It read as follows, in substance:

"To my oldest son, Jacob, in consideration of the interest he has specially manifested of late in my affairs, I devise and bequeath my Bugle Point property, situated and described as follows, to wit (here followed a fully accurate description of the estate thus bestowed) to have and to hold, and to further dispose of as may to him seem best, without let or hindrance of any kind from any person or persons whomsoever."

While looks of surprise were exchanged by others, Jacob sat perfectly still. He was asking himself questions that tortured his conscience by their persistency. In bequeathing to his oldest son this property alone, had Mr. Ehrich acted from a belated sense of his own duty or from motives of punishment? Had he relied more on Jacob's honor than on his own? Or

had he left merely the Bugle Point estate to Jacob with a view of placing the alternative before him of beggaring himself at the call of honor, or of stifling honor in behalf of self-interest?

Had Mr. Ehrich lived, this burden would not have fallen on Jacob, except indirectly, as the son's influence might have impelled the father to do what was right. But as it now was, the fulfillment of what the son had so strongly urged upon the father would fall upon the son alone. It would also leave Jacob penniless, as all the rest of Mr. Ehrich's property was left to others—mostly to Sidney junior and Mrs. Ehrich.

Meanwhile the other heirs were looking on Jacob as being exceedingly fortunate. The Bugle Point estate was the most valuable investment Mr. Ehrich had made. The phosphate works, started by him, were proving very profitable.

But while others were wondering and commenting, Jacob himself said little or nothing. He was fighting the battle of his life.

Four days after the death of the head of the house the Ehrich family, accompanied by Uncle Hiram, returned to Edisto. On the boat young Sidney prowled about the docks, engine-room, men's quarters, and even invaded the captain's state-room.

From this he was ejected, and he presently came across Jacob, standing by the deck-rail, staring vacantly at the ruins of old Fort Sumter, which they were then passing.

"I say, Jake," said Sidney, who, after his first outburst of grief, had taken his father's death lightly, "what's the matter with you? If I was as big as you are, the captain wouldn't order me round so easy. He is too fresh, anyhow."

"Keep yourself from prying and nosing round where you've no business to be, then. You should keep quiet and behave at such a time as this, I think. Look at poor mother."

"I can't help mother's crying, can I? It won't help father for me to snuffle around, as far as I can see. And here you are, as glum as an owl. You'll be putting on airs next over being boss down at Bugle Point. Uncle says father ought to have given you a guardian, as he did me."

For an instant Jacob wished that such a course had been followed, yet he soon repelled the feeling as unworthy of himself, under the peculiar conditions relating to the bequest—conditions understood now by himself alone. He had already made up his mind what he should do, and was only undecided as to the best method of bringing about the change he had determined on.

Of course his own relatives would oppose him. He was not sure but what they would attempt to deprive him of the control of the property, on the ground that he was still a minor, and hardly capable of knowing what was best for his own interests. He had confidence in his mother's sense of what was right, however.

That night he told her privately what had passed between himself and Gillis, and also related the conversation he had had with his father.

Mrs. Ehrich was greatly shocked, but the effect was to rather neutralize her natural grief and brace up her moral courage.

"Are you sure, Jacob, that you have not mistaken things?" she finally asked. "I never dreamed that such work was going on, or that your father would countenance such methods. Your uncle Hiram is at the bottom of all this, I feel sure. He has influenced your father."

"I think so, too, mother. He knows where that stolen State grant is. Do you think he will give it up?"

"He might be made to, if he felt that Radnor Gillis' testimony would inculpate him in the eyes of the law. But do not let us do anything hastily. I feel shocked and mortified, Jacob. To think that we have been living here for years wrongfully! I don't wonder we are despised by the neighbors—if they have an inkling of the real state of affairs."

"We can right the wrong, mother. That is what I am determined to do, if I have to work for day wages to support myself hereafter. I

thank father, now, that he has put it in my power to do this thing."

"As soon as may be, I will move to my own house in town. Sidney will go with me. Meantime you must keep your appointment with poor Rad. I hope he will get off safely. You might, as a precautionary measure, ask him to send you an affidavit, signed and withessed in a thoroughly legal way, as to the theft of the deed."

Mrs. Ehrich here stopped, and turned deathly pale. She was thinking that this step might compromise the memory of her husband, yet even that—her conscience told her—should be subordinated to the requirements of justice and honor.

Jacob divined the nature of her emotion.

"I know all this is hard, mother," said he.
"But let us do what is right to the living. We cannot harm the dead."

The widowed mother gave way to tears, yet she thanked God that He had given her such a son. Jacob, on his part, felt strengthened for his approaching encounter with Uncle Hiram. That old gentleman went back to town the following day, but he took time to go over the whole place, and was profuse in advice to Jacob as to the best way whereby the plantation and works should be managed.

"I tell you, Jake," he chuckled, "you are one lucky boy. It is a fine place. No end of money to be made, and all in your own hands—and you hardly eighteen. At your age I was working for old Ezra Davis, on Myrtle Street, for five dollars a week. Some folks might kick at your father putting such power into the hands of a minor; but Esmond, he says it is all good down here."

"Though I am very young, I shall try to do what is right," replied Jacob, cautiously, for he was not yet ready to come to an issue with Uncle Hiram.

"The right thing, Jake, is to make more money. Money makes the mare go, Jake. Don't you forget that."

Uncle Hiram went his way, scattering what

he considered good counsel in profusion behind him.

The days passed quietly. There were no callers. Even Paul did not follow up his friendly manifestations on the occasion of delivering the letter to Jacob. Sona Legare, too, remained invisible, though it was learned that she had returned from the city.

"Well," thought Jacob, "I cannot help this sort of thing. Somehow it does not hurt so bad as it did. I think it is because I have made up my mind to do what is right, no matter what happens."

The young man busied himself about the property. The works, after being closed two days, at the time of the funeral in town, were reopened.

Mr. Ehrich's foreman was trusty and competent. Jacob simply told him to go ahead, as usual. The office he took charge of himself, and managed in a way that caused the old book-keeper to say that young Ehrich would develop as good a head for business as his father's.

The day appointed for the meeting with Gillis opened with a clear sky, a brisk southeast wind, and a scurry of light clouds in the northern horizon, as if old Boreas might stir up something in that quarter before night.

Jacob told his mother privately what he was intending to do, though Sidney supposed that a fishing trip was intended, and grew sulky because Jacob would not take him along.

As the Sylph shot across the sound toward the cluster of islets near Loon Beach, sundry vexing flaws of wind blackened the water from time to time, in a way that gave Jacob some premonitory anxiety.

"It will be rough outside," he said to himself, as he hauled up under the lee of the very islet where Gillis had sprung on board the dory. "I hope the Havana steamer will run close in to-day."

As he lowered the sail and pushed the boat behind a projecting chain of rocks, the bushes parted and Gillis appeared. Jacob hardly recognized the man.

"Why, Rad," he said, laughingly. "I thought it was some Charleston dude, instead of Rad Gillis! Did you have old Ja-ja for a valet?"

But instead of replying to this badinage in the same way, Gillis held up a warning finger.

The escaped convict was, however, greatly altered in his appearance and for the better. His face was cleanly shaved, except for a moustache, and his short hair was well brushed. A neat business suit of gray cassimere and a pair of well-blacked shoes completed his toilet.

All this change was owing to the generously-packed grip that Jacob had brought to the shell-mound.

"What is the matter, Rad?" asked Jacob, holding the Sylph's nose close to a rock, so that Gillis might jump aboard, which he did rather hastily.

"Hoist away, Jake, and get out into the sound as quick as you can," replied Gillis. "I mustn't be seen just yet."

So saying, he crawled under the half-decked

bow, somewhat at the risk of soiling his new clothing. Jacob hoisted sail, pushed off with his boat-hook, and soon the Sylph was easing away toward the inlet with the wind abeam.

"Look if you can see old Ja-ja's signal, Jake. He was to hoist a handkerchief I gave him, at intervals, if those fellows showed any sign of following us."

"What fellows?" questioned Jacob. "Are we being watched?"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SHARPIE MAKING SEAWARD—AN EXCHANGE—
OLD HAM GRUMBLES.

Gillis peered cautiously over the weather gunwale before he answered.

- "We are hardly far enough to see them yet," he said, at length.
- "See who? Why don't you let me know what is up at once?"
- "There is a large sharpie right opposite where you took me on board. They landed just before you came across, and they appear to be fishing. But somehow I cannot help feeling that they are the same fellows who tried to catch me at the shell-mound that day. I say, Jake, how did you get away? Old Ja-ja would

only grin and mutter when I asked him about it."

Jacob smiled and briefly told how Ja-ja came to his rescue. Then Gillis told how he and Ja-ja outwitted the officers, and returned to Towie Swamp, where they remained quietly hidden until their arrival at the islets, the night before these present happenings.

"Look!" exclaimed Jacob. "There goes Jaja's signal, I think."

A red handkerchief was waved several times above the scrub on the islet, then disappeared. Then a sharpie came out from behind a point of palmetto and headed for the inlet. Three men were aboard, and one of them was pointing at the Sylph, which was also making the same course, and was about half a mile to windward.

"They are either going out on the bar to fish or they are intending to intercept us at the inlet."

"They are not troubling about fishing only as a blind, Jake. They are after me. Is your boat a fast one?"

"She cannot be beat round here. But how could they have got on your track again?"

"Well, there are a half dozen watching the land routes, and I suppose these fellows are cruising up and down the sound to prevent me or that negro from getting away by sea."

"It is a dead beat to the inlet. From their position on the weather side of the islets, they have the start of us. But perhaps we can dodge them among the islands at this end of the channel leading out to the bar."

From their respective positions and the course necessarily marked out for both, the two craft gradually drew nearer to each other.

Gillis remained carefully concealed, and seemed more anxious than usual. The men on the sharpie sat well to windward. Jacob could see rifles leaning against the wash-board in the stern. One of them occasionally scanned the Sylph with a glass.

Both boats were close-hauled on the wind, which blew directly from a number of mangrove islands that clustered about the landward

end of the inlet. Perhaps three-quarters of a mile now separated the two boats.

About this time a long dug-out canoe appeared from behind one of these islands, heading for the west toward Waccamaw. A large, ragged sprit sail was hoisted, and, the wind being free, she bore down on the sharpie at a great rate.

"That is Paul Roanoak's boat," said Jacob.
"I think he and old Ham are aboard."

Then he fell into a reverie. Both canoe and sharpie remained together for a moment. Then the canoe resumed her course, and presently the sharpie dodged behind the nearest island, she having had the advantage in position core the Sylph, thus being able to gain the reaches of the inlet first.

"She will lie there in wait for us," thought Jacob; "but if Paul is still true, I may be able to thwart these fellows yet."

The sharpie having disappeared, he headed the Sylph for the canoe, and presently the two craft were within hailing distance. Gillis said nothing, feeling instinctively that Jacob had some plan in view.

"Hello, Roanoak!" called Jacob. "Will you do me another favor without asking any questions, until I can explain things safely myself?"

Paul was surprised, of course, at this abrupt request.

"Less git on, Marse Paul," urged old Ham from amidships. "Don't you go projikin long er dem Ehrichs any mo'."

But Paul's answer was to change the canoe's course with a sweep of his paddle, that brought it alongside of the Sylph.

Then both boats hung together, with their sails shivering loosely in the wind.

"Of course I will, Jacob," said Paul, to the first request, though his manner was somewhat reserved.

Jacob's face flushed, then he grew pale. He felt that the moment was a critical one for both Gillis and himself. There was also no time to lose.

The sharpie might reappear at any moment,

or the man with the field-glass might be looking at them even then.

"I know this all sounds queer, Paul," continued Jacob, pluckily. "But I have a man here who is in a very tight place, more through the faults of others than his own. I am trying to do him a service, and I want your aid for an hour or so."

The pause that ensued before Paul replied was painfully intense to Gillis, even more than to Jacob.

"This is coming it rather strong, isn't it?"
Paul did not know what to think. "What is it
you want me to do?"

"I want you to exchange boats with me for a little while. I know you will think it strange, and there is hardly time to explain why I want to do this. Be sure of one thing, though. You will be helping the wretched, and conferring a favor on me that I think I can return with interest before long."

- "You speak in riddles," Paul hesitated.
- "Squar' away dat sail, Marse Paul," whis-

pered Ham. "Dat Ehrich, he ain't atter no good, no how."

"Hush, Ham!" Paul looked steadily into Jacob's open, anxious face, then added, decisively, "Run alongside. If you are in a hurry, the quicker we change about the better. I don't see but one of you, though."

While speaking the canoe and the dory touched sides, and Gillis leaped lightly into the former, grip in hand.

"Rest assured, sir, that you are as good as saving an unfortunate man's life," he said, as he coiled himself down in the bottom.

Paul said nothing, except to ask Jacob:

- "Where are we to go, and what are we to do?"
- "Run on to the inlet. If the sharpie tries to overhaul you, show her your heels. Dodge round among the islands, and hang about here somewhere until I come back."
 - "And you, Jacob?"
- "I shall run up inside to the upper inlet, and put out there. We are going to intercept the

Havana steamer. When she passes I will return."

- "Alone?" asked Paul, meaningly.
- "Yes, alone. I know it looks queer; but when I tell you all, as I expect to in a few days, I think you will say that I have done the right thing under the circumstances."
- "I lay you don't do no sech a t'ing," grumbled Ham, sotto voce.
- "Be quiet, Ham! Well, I always liked you personally, Jacob. I think I am giving proof of it now. Sheer off."

The two boats, having changed crews, fell apart, the canoe going up the inner side of Mullet Beach toward the upper inlet, five miles away, while the Sylph, with Paul at the tiller, resumed her course toward the inlet. By the boy's direction, the old negro crawled under the bow—much, however, to his own dissatisfaction.

"Only one of us should be seen," said Paul, remembering that Gillis had kept out of sight, and that if he was to personate Jacob a similar caution must be observed as to Ham's presence.

The dory soon reached the channel running between the islands at the mouth of the inlet, and passed leisurely through, as if bent only on purposes of sport or pleasure. The sharpie was not visible until the Sylph had reached the inlet proper. Then Paul saw the two-sailed boat cruising near the bar, as if engaged in fishing for bass, skip-jack, or other deep-water fish.

"Ham, I reckon we might as well go fishing, too. It will pass the time. I see Jacob has brought along some tackle."

"How I gwine ter fish wifout dem ar folks on de sharpie a-seein' me? I ain't made ob lookin'-glass, if I is 'gaged in sech foolishness as dish yere."

"Well, you can sit in the bottom of the boat and bait the hooks. Here is a covered pail with some live mullet swimming 'round. Jacob must have anticipated some sport, if only as a blind."

So Paul anchored the Sylph behind a little bite that made out from shore at the turn of the inlet seaward, and for an hour or more fished with considerable success. Ham baited the hooks and grumbled in his usual strain. The glass in the sharpie was leveled at the Sylph more and more frequently.

"Those fellows are getting puzzled," thought Paul. "They evidently expected the Sylph to try and cross the bar. Now they don't know what to think."

At last, Paul saw the great foresail of the sharpie swing outward before the wind. Then the mainsail followed suit, and the boat came toward the Sylph at a nine-knot gait, both wind and the incoming tide favoring such a course.

"Shall I wait for him, or take counsel of Jake and show him our heels?" Paul asked himself, as he watched the approach of the two swaying lug-sails.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SHARPIE GIVES CHASE—OLD HAM OBJECTS—
A SAIL.

Uncle Ham had in the meantime fallen asleep under the bow.

"So much the better," reflected Paul. "I shall be rid of his remonstrances for a time. I must be acting strangely to the old man. I can hardly explain it to myself, except that I somehow feel that Jacob would not ask me to do a really wrong thing. Sona might approve of this; but as for the rest of our folks, they would deem me either idiotic or crazy."

While thinking thus, Paul had drawn up anchor and allowed his sail to fill. The Sylph was gliding back up toward the island, when there came a call from the sharpie.

"Boat ahoy!" rang over the water. "Hold on; we want to speak with you!"

"I can outrun him with this boat," thought Paul. "What had I better do?"

A man in the sharpie's bow was still shouting and gesticulating. Paul hesitated only a moment longer. Then, instead of squaring away before the wind, he trimmed his sheets closer, and awaited the arrival of the other boat.

When the sharpie was within fifty yards, however, Paul pushed his helm a-weather, and directly the Sylph was gliding away from the more clumsy, larger boat at a rate that convinced Paul he could play at will with these prying people as long as the wind held.

At this juncture Ham awoke.

"Whar is we now, Marse Paul?"

"We are almost alongside the sharpie. So lie still and hold your tongue."

Ham subsided with muffled grumblings. There came another hail from the sharpie.

"We want to come aboard of you!" rang out. "Ease up there!"

"He seems to be a peremptory sort of a fellow," thought Paul, who kept on his course without obeying.

"We are officers of the law!" shouted the man with the glass. "I order you to lie to until we are up with you."

While this was going on, old Ham suddenly popped his head above the gunwale. Paul instantly ordered him down, but the negro's face was seen. A hurried consultation took place on board the sharpie. The men grasped their Winchesters. Then a third call was heard.

"We are after an escaped convict from Pocataglio. We have reason to think you have him on board. So halt, there, or we shall compel you to stop."

"Will, eh?" At the man's domineering tone, Paul's eye began to glitter. "What do you think, Ham? They say you are a convict. What do you say to that, you old sinner?"

"Don't say nuttin'. I 'lowed we-alls would git inter a rukus de way you been gwine on. Dat I sho'ly did, Marse Paul." Ham spoke sulkily, but Paul merely laughed. He began to feel reckless.

- "What kind of a man is your convict?" he called to the sharpie.
- "Negro, five feet ten inches high;" and the man repeated the description in a high monotone.
- "Does that fit you, Ham?" said Paul. "If it does, you are a better looking negro than I've given you credit for being."
- "Marse Paul, you hesh up dat ar nonsense.

 Let de gen'lum see who I is. Old Ham ain't
 afeard of any 'tenshary gyard 'at ever helt a
 gun. Ole Ham ain't done nuttin'."
 - "I don't know about that. You've been sassing me, and it may be that fellow knows of worse things. At any rate, I don't intend he shall lug you off without he has a good race for it."

While thus joking with the old darkey, Paul had held the Sylph to her course, despite the warnings of the officer on the sharpie, who, seeing that no heed was given to his threats, began to ostentatiously examine his Winchester.

"Yo'd better ease up and stop dish yere foolishness, Marse Paul," said Ham, anxiously. "Fust you know, he plug a bullet th'oo one ob us, sho'ly."

"Then get under cover again, and it will not be you," rejoined Paul, heading for the nearest mangrove island, now but a few rods off the Sylph's bow.

This suggestion Ham proceeded to adopt rather hastily, after a final glance at the sharpie, where one of the men was moving forward, rifle in hand.

"I lay I ain't gwine ter git shot, if you is, Marse Paul. Time you git older, you sense mo' bout keepin' a hole outen dat hide er you'n."

By this time Ham was under the bow. Paul sat, with his hat rakishly pulled over one ear and his whole manner expressing jocular defiance.

In a few more minutes the Sylph would be out of sight behind the mangroves. The sharpie had been losing ground rapidly, and was considerably to the rear of her former relative position when she first hailed the yacht.

"If you don't stop, we shall fire," sung out the spokesman of the party.

"Oh, no, you won't!" coolly replied Paul. "At least you're not going to risk a shooting match on mere suspicion." Then, to himself, in lower voice, "If you do, you are a bigger fool than I take you to be."

"Stop, I command!"

Paul kept his course. The point of mangroves was almost at hand. The man in the bow of the sharpie suddenly raised his weapon.

A loud report followed. The bullet sung past the Sylph's gaff, twenty feet above the deck.

"That is to scare us; but"—Paul shoved the tiller hard down—"we don't scare so easily. Eh, Ham?"

The yacht shot gracefully out of sight, behind the mangroves, and, assisted by the incoming tide, glided like some great swan round the bend of a small channel, one of several formed by the network of islets that stretched for a mile or more from the inside entrance to the inlet up the sound shore of Mullet Beach.

"He is more liable to take the wrong channel here than the right one, for there are three times as many of them. I say, Ham, rouse out, now! We can dodge about here all day from this fellow."

"Tain't right, Marse Paul! We'd orter let him run up and take a look at us. Tain't no good dodgin' de law, in de long run."

"Well we may as well be shot for a sheep as for a gopher. If it was wrong to do as Jake Ehrich desired, it is no addition to the scrape we are in to make these pen fellows a little trouble. It amuses me, and it doesn't hurt them—much."

"I lay dey hu't yo', though, when dey kotch us?"

"Yes, when they do," with a meaning emphasis on the "when."

For an hour or more Paul played mischievously with the sharpie. He knew the crooked channels and tide-currents perfectly, and his boat was the swifter. The guards were simply choking with rage. As Paul knew, they dare not shoot to hurt on a vague suspicion; but they stuck to their purpose of overhauling the Sylph with a persistence worthy of better success.

But at last even Paul wearied of the one-sided chase. The guards also wondered why—with so fast a boat—he lingered about the inlet, instead of availing himself of the southeaster to escape up the sound. It began to look as if Paul were merely tantalizing them. Would he do so if he really had an escaped convict aboard?

So, without abandoning the chase entirely, the sharpie hung more about the mouths of the different channels, while the Sylph flitted hither and thither, in a seemingly strange and aimless way.

"This is growing tiresome," said Paul, at last. "I wish Jake Ehrich would come back with our boat. We shall miss our dinner."

They were nearing the open inlet then. The

sharpie was somewhere behind, among the islands. Old Ham mounted the bow and stood by the mast.

"Hi-yo!" He pointed eastward and seaward.
"Look out yan way, Marse Paul!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

JACOB RETURNS—THE OFFICERS ARE ANGRY—BAFFLED.

Paul rose in the stern, gripping the tiller between his knees. Half a mile away a long, low boat, carrying a single sail, was making in across the bar. Far to seaward, a black trail of smoke marked the receding passage of the Havana steamer, bound out.

The boat was Paul's canoe. One figure showed at the stern. Had Jacob been successful? Was the out-bound steamer intercepted? Paul would soon know.

Shortly after this the sharpie became visible, as it emerged from behind the nearest island. The canoe was now coming in over the bar.

Under the brisk breeze the surges were breaking for a long distance to seaward, and both Paul and Ham watched the progress of their battered dug-out amid the breakers so intently, that the boat containing the officers approached unperceived for a time.

"Dat ar' young Ehrich, he mighty good hand wif a boat, atter all," acknowledged Ham, at length. "Ki-yah! Look out dar, white boy! Breaker lak to git you dat time, sho'!"

An unusually large comber had rolled apparently clear over the canoe as Ham spoke. For a few seconds Paul thought that Jacob had certainly capsized. Then the tip of the high sprit was visible, and the sail swung heavily into view, followed by the upward pointing bow of the canoe.

Jacob could be seen braced back to windward, as he kept a tight grip on the steering oar, that he had thrust out to assist the rudder.

"Jake is a good boatman, and no mistake," thought Paul. "How completely I used to misjudge him when I called him a Miss Nancy."

Paul rose in the Sylph and waved his hat encouragingly, for Jacob was just entering the inner line of breakers. The stern of the dug-out rose high in the air. Jacob's legs could be seen spread far apart, as he held himself up against the heave of the boat. Then canoe, boatman and even sail disappeared again, as if that last tremendous surge had swallowed everything.

"Great king!" shouted Ham, springing up in his excitement. "Marse Jake gone up dis yere time. Less us git out dar, Marse Paul. Bettah pick de boy up fo' shark git him."

Paul had already altered his course toward where the last glimpse of Jacob had been caught. The great comber passed on, broke upon the inner bar, and dashed into a spreading, boiling cataract of foam. Then the canoe was seen in the midst, floating rather low, with Jacob busily bailing out water by the bucketful.

The Sylph made a "short leg" to windward, and hauled up just abaft the stern of the canoe, which was half full of water.

"Throw me a line, Jacob," called Paul. "I will give you a tow into still water."

This was done at once. Ham made fast the line round the Sylph's traveler, and the two boats swept up the inlet before the southeast wind at a rate that brought them abreast of the sharpie in a few minutes.

The officers rounded their boat to, in such a way as to sheer up alongside the Sylph—a movement that Paul did not now attempt to frustrate. Then they looked at Ham scrutinizingly.

"Do you recognize him?" asked Paul, somewnat sneeringly.

"He is not car man," replied one officer, in a disgusted tone. "Why could you not have let us come up before? It would have saved a lot of trouble."

"I am not supposed to bother my head about your affairs. If you choose to meddle with mine, that is your lookout."

"Young man, do you know we are officers of the law?"

"So you have said. I have only your word for it, though."

"Let the boy alone, Peters," spoke the leader, sharply. "We were fools for following him." He turned to Jacob.

"Are you not in the same boat we stopped three hours ago inside the sound?"

"How should I know?" said Jacob; for now that Gillis was safe he felt like chaffing these men, who had striven to make trouble. "You did not stop me, however."

The officers glanced from the canoe to the Sylph, then they once more scrutinized the occupants of the two craft. There was a mystery here. When they had first overhauled the dugout the two men who were now in the Sylph were then in the canoe.

What did this change denote? How was it that the canoe, after disappearing up the sound, was but just now coming in over the breakers with a new man at the helm?

"Look here, young men," said the leader among the penitentiary officers. "You have

been up to some game. We don't see into it yet, but we will, sooner or later. It is dangerous joking with the law—you are sure to get the worst of it in the long run. Come, now, be open with us; what is your game? We'll let you off easy for what you've already done, if you make a clean breast of it right here."

"You will, eh?"

Paul glanced at Jacob as he spoke.

It was Jacob's affair. Let Jacob, therefore, say what he chose. But Jacob merely winked at Paul, as an intimation that he had nothing to explain to these representatives of the law.

"See here," said one of the officers, impatiently. "What are you after, anyhow?"

"Want to know real bad?"

Paul's tone was openly mocking, and in his eye was a glint of careless mischief.

"Yes, and we propose to know, too."

"Well—in with you, Jake. Make that line fast, Ham. If you really and truly must know that which is none of your confounded business, we are after our dinners just at present. And if you don't quit bothering us we may miss them. Therefore, take good advice, and attend to your own affairs—that is, if you have any to attend to, which I somewhat doubt when I see the impudence with which you persist in meddling with ours. Trim that sheet in, Ham—so! We will take the south channel this time."

While Paul was speaking the canoe had been taken in tow of the Sylph, Jacob had entered his own boat, and the dainty little craft was gliding away on the last of the flood tide towards Waccamaw and the deferred dinners.

"Hold on there!" stormed the officer in command, now thoroughly angered. "You don't get away so easy, after leading us on such a wild goose chase. I order you to lie to and stay by us. I am by no means satisfied that you have not been guilty of an infraction of the law. Indeed, I feel sure on that point."

"It is time this nonsense stopped—eh, Jacob?" said Paul.

"I think so," responded young Ehrich. "You and Ham get into the canoe and go on. I will

give myself up in the Sylph. He can do nothing. My man is safe now, thanks to your aid."

"No-hang the fellow! He shall not lord it over us in such style."

Paul rose again and called out:

"Here, you! My name is Roanoak. I am a son of Squire Roanoak, of Waccamaw. This is young Ehrich, of Bugle Point. We are well known, and if you want us we can easily be found. We are going home. Now follow us, if you like."

After that the occupants of the Sylph gave no further heed to the sharpie or the officers, though the latter shouted and threatened for a time. Finally, seeing that they could not overtake the fleet dory and its tow, they sheered off and bore away towards the southwest, making down the sound.

"I knew they dare not shoot," said Paul, as they neared the entrance to the East and West Cuts. "But as long as we have vexed them so, and as they are really officers of the law, perhaps you had better not explain anything to me yet, Jacob. If I am asked awkward questions, the less I know the easier I can avoid explanations."

"This is very good of you, Paul." Jacob's eyes nearly filled, for he was keenly sensitive to good as well as evil opinions. "I shall find it difficult to repay you. Mere thanks sound inadequate. But this I will say. You have done nothing really wrong to-day. But you have aided a much persecuted man to go where he can have another chance to make something of himself. And, finally, I hope to show you before long that I am not ungrateful."

"Good-by, old fellow! Don't worry about repaying what Ham and I have done. As for those penitentiary fellows, I don't value their threats at a picayune."

"Good-by, Paul. I wish things were different, so we might see more of each other."

"So do I. But we cannot help it, I suppose. So long, Jacob!"

Old Ham turned the canoe up the East Cut.
Paul smiled back at Jacob, though he rather

wondered at himself later on that he had done what he had, to further the desires of an Ehrich.

Jacob hurried homeward, moored the Sylph to the end of the wharf, and hastened in to his mother's presence.

- "Any one about, mother?" he asked, in a precautionary tone. "Where is Sid?"
- "He is at the stables, I think. Did you succeed at last?"
- "I got Rad safely off, if that is what you mean. But I should never have succeeded but for Paul Roanoak."

Jacob then told how he had been pursued, and what Paul and old Ham had done.

- "I tell you, mother, I felt all the time as if Paul was heaping live coals on my head. But I shall repay him. Thank God, mother, that I can repay him now."
- "Of course you will. But tell me what Radsaid. How about that affidavit? What did he say when you told him about your father's sudden death?"

CHAPTER XIX.

JACOB GOES UP TO TOWN-UNCLE HIRAM REFUSES.

Jacob hesitated, then he answered slowly:

"I don't think Rad cared much. You see he feels very sore about the way he has been treated. But when I told him what we wanted with an affidavit from him, he sprang up and almost upset the canoe. We were outside, you know, and the steamer was bearing down on us fast."

"'Jacob,' said he, 'if you really want to fetch old Hiram to his knees, you shall have it, if I never do another thing on earth. Why, boy,' he added, 'I wouldn't miss giving you that affidavit for anything. It seems a little like revenge.'

"So I think as soon as the steamer reaches Key West or Havana, he will send it on. Then, if Uncle Hiram proves to be stubborn, we will find a way to make him produce that deed, if he really knows where it is. Rad says he undoubtedly does."

As may be imagined, the mails were watched rather anxiously at the Ehrich mansion for a week or more. At last there arrived a bulky packet bearing a Cuban postmark.

It included, besides the affidavit—which was attested before the American consul at Havana—a long letter from Gillis, full of expressions of gratitude, and intimating a determination to make a better man of himself, in spite of the past.

"Now, mother," said Jacob, the following morning, at the breakfast table, "I am going up to town. I hope, when I return, to have things in such shape that we will be able to hold up our heads before these proud sea island people. I also want to prove to Paul that my protesta-

tions of good feeling are not based on words alone."

"Folks may say what they will, Jacob. I know what kind of a son I have," replied Mrs. Ehrich, fondly.

"What are you talking about, mother?" protested Sidney, feeling as if he were in some way ignored. "Ain't you got me, too? What's the matter with your little Sid, anyhow?"

"You are all right—as far as cheek is concerned," commented Jacob, laughing.

"Hush, Jacob!" reproved the mother, gently. Then she added, more anxiously, "I hope—no matter what Uncle Hiram says—that you will be easy with him. He is your own father's brother, remember."

"I won't forget," assured the youth, as he put on his light overcoat and carefully pocketed the essential document. "I hope, though, Uncle Hiram won't forget that I am the son of his own brother."

Then he kissed his mother, ran down to the

wharf and was rowed across by a negro to the path leading to the steamer landing.

Some hours later he was seated in Hir Ehrich's back office, waiting while his uncle—in the store—tried to sell a five dollar watch for twice its worth to a countryman from the "piney woods" district.

At last the old man came in, leaving the salesroom in charge of a clerk. He was out of humor, for the countryman would not buy, but had crossed over to the establishment of a rival opposite.

At the rear of the office a large safe opened out of the wall, wherein were stowed the jewelry and other specially valued articles taken in through the pawnbroking branch of the business.

At one side was a dark wareroom, where the walls were lined with pigeon-holes. In these were packed the clothing, tools, instruments, bric-a-brac and other kinds of goods taken in as pledges for money advanced.

The whole place smelled of old clothes, moth preventive and general mustiness.

Uncle Hiram, glowering at Jacob through old-fashioned spectacles as he stood at a high, narrow desk, and dressed in rusty, ill-fitting habiliments, fully looked his part as the presiding genius of such a place.

"Well, what is it, Jake? You know Monday is one of my busy days. I work, work all the time. But there is precious little money coming in. People are getting to want too much. When I fairly give a man a remarkably cheap bargain, he wants me to throw in something to boot. Next they will want watches and good all-wool clothes for nothing—absolutely nothing."

"Do you sell your goods at a loss, uncle?"

"So help me, yes! There was a watch—patent lever, full jeweled, fine movement, gold case—ah! it is a beauty. But that fool of a cracker couldn't see it, though I offered it to him for a song—a mere song. I shall go to the



All three shouted with a vigor born of desperation (Page 310)



poorhouse yet, Jake. But what do you want? Is anything going wrong at the works?"

"Everything has gone wrong, uncle. It has never gone right since we took the Bugle Point property."

"My stars!" Hiram stared at his nephew in perplexity. "What do you mean? I suppose those negroes are trying to run things to suit themselves since my brother died. Well, well! I will go down in a day or two. They won't run over me, Jake. I'll fix 'em. We will pull their wages down a little, and see how they like that. Eh, Jake, my boy?"

Uncle Hiram chuckled with returning good humor, but his pleasant vein was crossed somewhat by his nephew's next remark.

"We will not lower the wages, uncle. I think they are too low as it is."

"You don't say! You will ruin yourself, Jake. But I will fix things when I go down. You trust to your uncle. If there is money to be made, old Hiram Ehrich will find the way."

"You mistake what I mean." Jacob spoke

firmly, for he felt that the crisis might as well be precipitated as not. "The reason things don't go well down there is because we all began wrong. I am determined now to begin right."

"That is all very well, Jake; but you must cut down expenses first."

"I must first get possession of the original grant of the Bugle Point plantation from the State. That is what I am after up here now."

"How, Jake? My gracious me! Is the boy crazy?"

Uncle Hiram took two quick turns across the small room, then fell into a chair and stared at Jacob, as if he had just discovered his nephew to be a dime museum freak.

"I am not crazy, unless it makes one crazy to try to do right. I may seem bereft of reason, according to your standards, Uncle Hiram; but I am making sure of my ground as I go."

"Oh, you are! This is what comes of omitting to make me your guardian. If I had only known what Brother Sidney was up to, I would never have witnessed that codicil."

"What is the use of all this talk?" Jacob felt

out of patience with this narrow-souled, moneyworshiping old man. "Unless Bugle Point was rightfully conveyed to father, it is not rightfully mine."

"This is some of that Rad Gillis' work, I know. Brother Sidney told me, only the morning he died, that Rad had told you lies."

"Rad did not tell lies. He told the truth. He had nothing to gain by lying, and he had much to gain by telling the truth. I know all about how father, influenced by you, came into possession of Bugle Point. Father acknowledged it to me. He even said that the wrong should be righted. And to make that more sure, he left the place to me, knowing I would carry out his last suggestions."

"Carry out a fiddlestick! Why, Jake, if you give up Bugle Point, you will be without a dollar. Why should you make a pauper of yourself to please those Roanoaks? I dare say they cannot buy it back, even if you were to offer it at costs, for all their blue blood and insolent ways."

"I don't think of that at all, uncle. I only

remember that they would have redeemed it once, if Rad had not stolen the old deed and given it to you and father. You have it now; or, at least, you know where it is. I want it, and I am going to have it, too!"

"Oh, you want it, do you, Jake?" Uncle Hiram's small eyes grew dark with anger. "I think I see you getting it and ruining yourself, out of sheer moral idiocy. Ha, yes! I think I see you doing that very same thing, Jake." Then changing his tone from satirical humor to a shrill, savage vindictiveness, "But you won't do it while I am here. Not much you won't! I will see to it that you do not have it in your power to rob our family by ruining yourself."

The idea of Jacob surrendering Bugle Point seemed so preposterous to the avaricious old man, that he emitted a shrill scream of mirthless laughter. Then, whirling short around, he shook a lean finger in Jacob's face.

"You ought to be whipped—that is what you deserve, Jake! What do you know about the value of money?"

"I know that the value of honesty is greater than the value of gold. I don't want Bugle Point under the terms through which we hold it, and I won't have it. So, there!"

"Tut, tut! How are you going to help your-self?" The old man suddenly smiled, with exaggerated sweetness. "I say nothing about that deed. Rad Gillis lied. I guess you will have some trouble to make the Roanoaks take back or pay for a place without that deed. Perhaps there never was any such deed."

"Oh, yes, there was! Father said so. You had better give it up, uncle."

"And suffer you to make an everlasting fool of yourself? Not much, Jake! It will be a cold day when you get left, through your Uncle Hiram's help."

"Then there is nothing for it but to find a way to make you give it up."

Jacob took out a folded document and opened it deliberately.

"Read that, uncle," said he; "then refuse what I ask you, if you dare!"

CHAPTER XX.

JACOB IS PERSISTENT—A LETTER FROM THE LAWYER.

The old man took the paper and held it close to his eyes. Then he paused, wiped his glasses and sent little darting glances to and fro through the document, until he reached the signatures at the bottom.

- "Radnor Gillis—American consul—Havana—m-m-h! Witnessed and sealed, too." He looked up at Jacob, sharply. "Is Rad out of the country, Jake?"
- "I put him on the Havana steamer myself. Do you intend to face that paper in court, uncle?"
- "No, I don't, Jake." Old Hiram suddenly tore the document into ribbons. "Not much I

don't! It is much easier to dispose of it this way."

He threw the fragments into the grate, and as the document burned, looked at his nephew with the evil glitter still strong in his eye, and with a smile on his lips that was more disagreeable to Jacob than a frown would have been.

"Now what are you going to do? Gillis will never come back, he loves his liberty too well. You do not know where he has gone. So, where are you—see?"

"No, I don't see. Did you think I was fool enough to trust you with the original of Rad's affidavit? Not much. That is only a copy. I had it done at the Spanish Consul's as I came along. The ink was hardly dry on it. If you were not so near-sighted, uncle, you could hardly have failed to notice that it was only a copy."

The old man sank into a chair again. Even in his disappointment he seemed struck by Jacob's shrewdness in outwitting him thus. Probably this feeling strengthened a sudden

inkling that dawned upon him, as to the uselessness of further contention.

After all, it was not so easy to pull the wool over Jake's eyes. But what a pity that so sharp a lad should be so hopelessly given over to simply ruining himself! Under these reflections, Uncle Hiram's lean figure gradually collapsed. He looked at his nephew with a sort of entreaty in his hard, little eyes.

"That was a tough move, Jake—tough on your uncle. I didn't think you had it in you. But—come now, my boy; why not listen to reason?"

"I have gone over it all fully, and my mind is made up. You know I don't want to injure you, uncle, but I must have that deed."

"Oh, Jake! I may be ruined if—if—"

He paused, and eyed Jacob with such meaning that the youth interposed with:

"No one shall know how the deed was found.

Trust me for that."

"Well, then, Jake, I suppose I must." He went to the great safe, opened a smaller one,

and, after fumbling among some documents, returned with one that was yellow with age. "Here it is. You promise me now, that I shall hear nothing more of Rad and his confession—all lies, of course—yet—"

"I promise. You know you may depend on me." Jacob seized the paper and scrutinized it carefully, feeling that Uncle Hiram was none too good to repeat Jacob's own feat of substitution. "I am glad you have done this uncle. It will give me a chance to right matters at last. I had rather pick rags in the street for a living than get rich at Bugle Point as things are at present between us and the rightful owners."

"All bosh, my dear boy. You will feel differently by-and-by, and you will say, then, that old Hiram was right. That's what you will say, Jake."

But Jacob shook his head as he bade his uncle good-by.

The old man, now that the transfer had been accomplished, seemed more saddened than angry. A lingering uneasiness, that was more a

habit of nature than caused by real suspicion, was also observable. But he had greater confidence in Jacob's truthfulness than in the lad's financial judgment.

On the steamer, Jacob felt lighter at heart than he had done for a long time previously. At last it was fully in his power to place the Ehrich family aright before the world, by an act which was as purely honorable as it was unselfish and unique.

That night, when he told his mother of the events attendant on securing the deed, Sid, who was present, listened open-mouthed, but scornful.

"See here, mother," said this youthful skeptic, "is Jake going to give up Bugle Point just because he wants to?"

"He gives it up because he feels that it rightfully belongs to the Roanoaks, after they pay some back taxes and other expenses that your father incurred when the place came into his hands."

[&]quot;And he don't have to give it up?"

"No, he doesn't have to. He only wants to do what is right."

"Huh!" Sid turned on his heel, derisively.
"I just know that father wouldn't do no such way, if he was alive. I don't believe in no such way, myself. Bet your life, no one don't get what I'm to have."

"I don't believe they will, Sid. But you and I are two different persons, you know," remarked Jacob, quietly.

So it happened that a day or two later Paul Roanoak brought a letter from the Waccamaw post office, addressed to the squire. It bore a Charleston postmark, and also the return address of a lawyer named Esmond. The squire put on his eyeglasses, and scowled when he observed the name.

"Is not that Sidney Ehrich's lawyer?" he asked of Miss Europa.

"I am sure I don't know. The concerns of those people are of so little importance, that I remember almost nothing, James." "I think Jacob said—" began Paul; then he stopped.

The squire's scorn and wrath rose at once.

- "You think Jacob said! What business is it of yours what they say?"
- "I only meant that their family lawyer's name is Esmond."
- "And this Jacob told you, so I suppose. If you were a true Roanoak, you would have nothing to do with those people. Family lawyer! Faugh! What business have such folks with family lawyers?" He turned to his sister, sure there of a sympathetic auditor. "I tell you, Europa, we are all going to the dogs. When the bottom rail gets on top, and is helped by our children to stay there, it is time for such old fogies as you and me to slide into our graves and be forgotten."

"Now, father—" began Paul.

But here the door opened, and in came Sona and Edgar Legare, fresh from a morning ride from their own home.

"Howdy, Uncle James? Howdy, aunty?"

Sona kissed them both, while Edgar, just from town the day before, shook hands all around.

"What are you going on about, Uncle James?" continued Sona, gaily. "It is too lovely a day to quarrel about anything, I think."

"Perhaps you had better read the letter, James," suggested Aunt Europa. "If it is anything disagreeable, we will have it over with and out of the way."

While the others chatted together, the squire, still glowering and grumbling, opened the missive and began to read; but as he proceeded the gradual change of countenance he underwent was so complete and unusual, that the others noticed it with growing wonder.

"Is anything really wrong, James?" asked Aunt Europa, anxiously.

The squire sat staring at the letter in a helpless sort of way.

"I don't know," he replied. "It looks all right; but it may be some new trickery they're up to. Read it aloud, Edgar. You may be able to see through it better than I."

So Legare, taking the letter, read as follows: "James Roancak, Esq.,

"Roanoak Hall, Waccamaw, S. C.

"Dear Sir: Since the recent death of my client, Sidney Ehrich, a general search has taken place through his papers, and there has been a straightening out of his affairs, which were much complicated. During this, evidence has come to light which convinces his oldest son that there was an injustice done you in the manner of the transfer of the Bugle Point plantation to Mr. Ehrich, now deceased.

"By the terms of Mr. Ehrich's will, his son Jacob becomes full owner and possessor of all his father's rights in said plantation and its appurtenances. It is his desire, without reflecting in any manner upon his father's conduct, to right, so far as lies in his power, the wrong which may have been done to your interests by Mr. Ehrich's retention of the property. Jacob, though a minor, is supported in this matter by Mrs. Ehrich, and no hindrance will be given by any other member of the family.

"He therefore desires me to ask you—either in person or by some authorized representative—to meet him at my office in Charleston at whatever time will best suit your convenience, in order to adjust these matters in a manner which, I trust, may prove satisfactory to both parties therein concerned.

"I am, very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"Hugo Esmond,

"Attorney at Law."

"There! What do you think of that?" demanded the squire of the listeners generally, as Legare handed him back the letter.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT THE LAWYER'S OFFICE.

For a moment no one spoke. Sona's cheeks began to glow softly, and, as her eye met Paul's, the boy could restrain himself no longer.

"I think Jacob is a brick, father," he exclaimed. "I always felt that, if he had half a chance, he would show the makings of a gentleman."

"Oh, Paul!" ejaculated Sona, while her ardent eyes spoke further for her, as confirming every word Paul had uttered.

"T-s-s-h!" Squire Roanoak's manner expressed both scorn and derision. "I would as soon trust a rattlesnake as an Ehrich. I shall give no heed to his letter. It is some new trick. What do you think, Legare?"

"It may be," said Legare, cautiously. "But I would see what he means. There is no harm in that. You need not go yourself, you know."

"I should say not. It hardly seems worth bothering about to me. They swindled us out of Bugle Point, and they doubtless have some other scheme in view now. But, if you think best, I will authorize you to see Esmond. You are in town, and you need commit yourself to nothing. Will it be too much trouble?"

"Of course not. You can write to Esmond, saying that I will call on him next Friday."

"Not on Friday!" interrupted Sona. "Say some other day."

"Well, Thursday," laughed Edgar. "How will that do, Miss Superstition?"

"Much better. And perhaps Paul and I will run up to town and look in on you—just to see fair play, you know."

"You and Paul had better stay here," said the squire. "You think too much of those Ehrichs already." "And I see no harm in doing so, as far as Jacob is concerned, at least."

And Sona danced out of the rooms to avoid the wrathful answer that she foresaw would follow.

Paul also went, and the conversation soon changed, the squire agreeing to post a letter to the lawyer on that same day.

When the steamer made her usual return trip, Legare was on board. He seldom was able to remain longer than a day or two from his paper.

On the following Thursday, he was getting ready to go over to Esmond's office, when he was joined by Paul and Sona.

"We were late for the steamer," said the girl; "so what do you think we did?"

"You ought to have stayed at home," replied her brother, slightly irritated at his sister's appearance.

"Oh, no, we hadn't! Paul and I are going to see this thing through. We came up on an oyster boat. And we made a bet—didn't we, Paul?"

"Worse and worse!" Legare laughed, how-

ever, as he added, "I suppose you bet on Jacob."

"That we did! If he does what is right, you pay."

"I pay! This is another swindle. What have I to do with your bets?"

Edgar's manner was one of pretended surprise.

"Well, brother, you know you would bet against the poor fellow, if you bet at all. But we are going with you, anyhow."

"Come along, then. It is time I was at the lawyer's."

The three left the newspaper office, and were soon ushered into Mr. Esmond's private consultation-room, where the lawyer and Jacob Ehrich were seated, inspecting rather closely a faded parchment with antiquated-looking seals attached. Mr. Esmond folded this up and laid it aside as he rose to greet Legare. When all were seated, he asked, rather formally:

"I suppose you have met young Ehrich before?"

Jacob had bowed to the three in a grave, dis-

tant way, though his eyes lighted up at sight of Paul and Sona. Legare admitted that he knew Jacob; then the lawyer proceeded at once to business.

"Certain things have come to the knowledge of my young client recently. It is not necessary to say more about them than that he desires to make amends for the neglect of his father. This he does unreservedly, without attaching any conditions whatever to the form of restitution but one. And that is that there shall be no impugning or investigating anything that his father or uncle may be supposed to have done. My client thinks that Squire Roanoak will not hesitate to accept this offer, as the advantages thereby accruing will lie wholly on the Roanoak side of the question. Do I make myself clear?"

"In a general way—yes," said Legare, reservedly. "I suppose you are referring to the Roanoak claim to Bugle Point?"

"Precisely! In short, Jacob thinks a wrong has been done to Squire Roanoak. He does not want to enter into a discussion of the motives or causes that resulted in that wrong. He simply wants to make such amends as he can, without having anything said more than the acceptance or rejection of his offer."

"What does he offer? I am authorized on the part of Squire Roanoak to express his wishes in anything relating to the property mentioned in your letter."

"He offers to give up the property to Squire Roanoak unreservedly, and without any preliminary condition attached. Under the terms of his father's will, he has the right to do this."

Paul and Sona looked at each other. Then Sona clasped her hands.

"Oh, Jacob—" she began, impulsively, then stopped, flushed red, and lowered her eyes before Edgar's rebuking glance.

"After this is done, and Squire Roanoak is in full possession, if he thinks he owes the estate of Sidney Ehrich anything on account of moneys expended, or for the phosphate works erected by my client's father, my client is prepared to accept, and be satisfied with any sum which Squire Roanoak thinks he ought to pay."

Mr. Esmond paused to let his words have due weight, then resumed:

"I deem it necessary to state here that I have advised my young client against such an unreserved renunciation of all his own claims, which are considerable. The place is much more valuable now than before Mr. Ehrich took hold. I have told him that, notwithstanding any injustice that may have formerly been done, he himself is hardly responsible for the present state of things. This property is all he has in the world. He had better stipulate beforehand for a proper estimate as to what would be due to him in case the property is transferred to its former owners. But he will not adopt my suggestions, and has instructed me to make to you the offer I have now done. Do I correctly state your views, Jacob?"

"Yes—all but the deed," said Jacob, in a low tone. "It, too, must go with the rest."

"Well, I don't approve of it, mind; but-just

as you say." Mr. Esmond looked disgusted. "It is very irregular. There was an old deed, Mr. Legare. Perhaps you have heard of such a document?"

"Yes—the old State grant, I suppose you mean. I have heard my uncle bemoan its loss. It was, I think, lost during the war, or the troublesome era succeeding that contest. Some say it was stolen—"

"At all events, here it is." Mr. Esmond spoke with emphasis, at the same time handing to Legare the time-stained parchment, with the antiquated seals attached. "You can take it to Squire Roanoak as an evidence of the sincerity of my client's intentions."

While Legare was inspecting the document, Paul walked over and gave Jacob his hand. The two boys gazed at each other like long-separated friends. Jacob felt that his reward was already beginning.

"I understand, now, what you were hinting at the other day," said Paul. "Jacob, this is

the noblest thing I ever heard of. We—but what is the use of talking?"

"It is not much," said Jacob. "At least it seems to me only like doing the right thing—or what ought to have been done long ago."

Sona sat with her eyes fixed on Jacob. They were gradually filling, but she dashed the tears aside with a hasty movement.

"Is it all you really have, Jacob?" she asked, in a low tone. "The Bugle Point property, I mean."

"No, Miss Sona." Jacob smiled. "I have good health, two hands and a will to work. That is a great deal more, I think."

Meanwhile, Legare and the lawyer had been conferring apart. At the conclusion Legare came over to where Jacob was standing.

"I will give this deed to Squire Roanoak, since you wish me to," said he to Ehrich. "But, though I was somewhat prejudiced against your family for reasons which you doubtless recall, still I concur with Mr. Esmond in this, that you should not surrender too much absolutely, not

even to right a wrong. The squire will doubtless do what is just. But you had better concede only what you have to—at first. I am bound to say you may make better terms—''

"No, no," interrupted young Ehrich. "I have set my heart on having my way in this. Do not think that I have not counted the cost. My mother is with me. Give me at least the satisfaction of making myself poor in my own manner. It is not money, but respect, regard, that I am after."

Legare was won over at last. He, too, shook Jacob's hand warmly.

"You may rely on all I can do to see that your individual interests do not suffer any more than can be helped. I say more, Jacob. You may count on me as a friend—that is, if you now care for me to be one."

Jacob felt gratified, of course. In the days to come, when he would have to work for a living, perhaps Legare would help him into some kind of literary or journalistic employment.

"By the way, Jacob," said Legare, as Paul, Sona and he were leaving, "we are to have a general picnic and fish-fry at Loon Beach on Thanksgiving Day. I am one of the committee of management. If you will accept an invitation for yourself and family, I shall be glad to give you one."

Jacob knew that his father would have striven for such a social acknowledgment with all his might. It had come to him without his wish. In fact, he felt indifferent, but Sona here broke in with:

"Of course you will accept, won't you, Jacob? Think how disappointed we shall all be if you don't. I know some of the girls are dying to take a sail in the Sylph."

"Oh, well," laughed Ehrich, "if you put it in that way I must say yes, I suppose. It would never do to let those girls die. How many are there besides you, Sona?"

"You ridiculous boy! Don't you know that you ought to be immensely grateful instead of

critical? Paul, let us go before he changes his mind."

And they followed Legare to the elevator, laughing and joking. Indeed, the spirits of all the party appeared to have been raised, somehow, by what had occurred.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SQUIRE COMES ROUND—A NEW PARTNERSHIP.

When Jacob returned to Bugle Point, the following day, he found a letter there from Squire Roanoak. In it the squire thanked him in a formal way for the receipt of the old deed, and said that his own lawyer would communicate with Mr. Esmond in regard to the matters between the two families relating to Bugle Point.

There was a penciled postscript from Paul, evidently added without the squire's knowledge, for Paul often sealed and mailed his father's letters.

"Don't mind the governor's manner," it ran, "he can't help it, for he never has any other kind. The truth is, both he and Aunt Europa are simply paralyzed. They can't understand it, and would hardly believe it, but for that deed staring them in the face. But they are much impressed. If you care for their friendship, you have won it, in spite of themselves. As for myself—well, you know how I feel.

"Be sure and come to Loon Beach on Thanksgiving. I shall never forgive you if you don't."

The postscript enabled Jacob to better understand the probable spirit that prompted the letter.

It was soon understood at the works and about the place that a change of ownership was pending. Particulars were not generally known, yet gossip was not less pronounced on that account.

The neighboring planters took the matter up. Some of them went to the Roanoaks for confirmation or denial, but they did not learn much there. Once, when some one intimated that the Ehrichs were probably only doing what they were compelled to do, and that the squire must

have been grossly swindled by the deceased Ehrich, the squire flew into a rage and told his interlocutor to mind his own business.

"I confess," he added, "that I once did entertain prejudices against the family; but I have changed my mind, sir. Young Ehrich is a gentleman at heart, if not by blood, and that is saying a good deal for any man. I feel deeply indebted to his honor and honesty and thorough unselfishness."

During the interval elapsing between the Charleston episode of the previous chapter and the Loon Beach fish fry, Sona managed to sing Jacob's praises—or, rather, the perfections of the Sylph—to so many of the girls around, that it seemed likely Jacob would be overwhelmed with solicitations for boat rides on that occasion.

Meantime, the lawyers had been at work. Both Jacob and his mother made a trip to Charleston, where they met Squire Roanoak at the office of the latter's lawyer.

A general arrangement was effected, satisfactory to all parties. The squire, once his dis-

trust was changed into confidence, would not be outdone by Jacob in liberality. When it came to the phosphate works, he said:

"It is not right that we should own or run these works entirely by ourselves. Probably they might never have been started, if the place had remained in our hands all the time. Regarding this, I have now a proposal to make. Before doing so, however, I will state that all the members of my family concur with me in what I am going to say."

"Bet your life, father, I do!" said Paul, sotto voce, for he also was present.

"I understand that young Ehrich, here, has voluntarily left himself without either capital or an occupation by this transfer of property," continued the squire. "I honor him for his motives, and I offer him an equal partnership with my son Paul in running and managing the phosphate works at Bugle Point."

The squire delivered himself of the foregoing in rather a Websterian manner, then looked

smilingly around him for some expression of approbation.

Jacob, who was expecting nothing of the sort, was listening quite unconcernedly, until the last words of the squire's aroused his attention. Then he flushed, glanced quickly at Paul and grasped the hand of the usually haughty, but now amiable-looking old gentleman.

"This is very good of you, sir; very good, indeed," he exclaimed. "But I have done nothing to merit such indulgence. What I am doing now is only an act of justice, too long delayed. Much as I appreciate your offer, I fear—I fear that it—it would hardly be right for me to—to go in with Paul."

"Jacob, I did not think you would kick at the notion of being partners with me in anything."

"Of course not, Paul. I would rather black boots with you than eat turtle soup with some fellows. It isn't that, nor it isn't lack of gratitude that keeps me from jumping at Squire Roanoak's generous offer." "Well, what is it, then?" asked the squire, good-naturedly, yet slightly perplexed.

"I must not take things like that as a gift, don't you see?" Jacob smiled as he explained. "I have done nothing to merit being taken in as a partner, and I have no capital now."

"Jacob," interposed Mr. Esmond, "you seem to forget that certain money is due you because of what your father expended on the property. The back taxes and other legal expenses amount to more than two thousand dollars. Squire Roanoak, had he retained the place, would have had to pay this. Then there are the works built with your father's money and under his management. It is only right that you should be recompensed for that outlay. In fact, I feel safe in saying that what is rightfully due you as your father's heir is well worth a half interest in the works, if not more."

Here Mr. Esmond looked inquiringly at the squire's lawyer, who nodded affirmatively, while the squire said, in his sharp way:

"Hang it all, sir! If Jacob refuses my offer,

I will sell the works to an outsider, and pay his claim up in money thus acquired. So, my boy, you will get a share of them whether or no."

"Besides, Jacob, think how disappointed I shall be if I fail to get something to do myself," said Paul, half jocularly, yet with a tinge of earnestness. "Father has been studying over what he calls a career for ever so long. He and Aunt Europa are always worrying about what to do with me. They won't let me go for a clerk or a salesman, or anything of that kind. There is no fighting going on, so I can't go for a soldier. And now that this last chance offers itself through your great generosity, it seems a pity that you should kick over the good thing which you alone have made possible for me. You see how selfish I am."

"No, you're not, Paul." Jacob seized Paul's hand. "You are one of the best fellows I know, and as long as you put it in that way, I suppose I will have to say yes. I feel though that Squire Roanoak is doing better by me than I should expect, notwithstanding all Mr. Esmond said. If

we go in together, Paul, I hope you will find me as good a business partner as I have found you a true friend."

While the juniors gushed over each other with the volatile enthusiasm of eighteen, the older ones completed the legal requirements that were essential to make valid the new relations subsisting between the Roanoaks and the Ehrichs.

After the necessary signatures and attestations, Paul drew Jacob out of the office, saying:

"Let us get away, Jacob," and he laughed gaily. "I want to have a walk and a talk. All that lawyer business makes me tired. And yet Aunt Europa was set for a while on my studying law."

"I always felt as if I would like to be in the literary or journalistic line," said Jacob. "Instead of law and literature, I suppose we will grind up old bones for a living the rest of our days. Don't things come about queerly?"

Both the boys laughed. They felt in a gay humor, and were disposed to laugh at anything that could be by any means twisted into a comic light. Jacob led Paul down by the sea wall, where the Sylph lay.

- "Will you go back in her with me?" he asked.
- "Indeed I will! I suppose we can send back the old folks by the steamer?"
- "Certainly. Then let us hurry matters and be off. If we are spry, we can catch the ebb. It must be about slack water now."

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT LOON BEACH-THE BOAT RACE.

Thanksgiving Day did not belie the promise implied in the good weather that had for a week preceded it—that is, it opened well.

The sun rose in a cloudless sky. The wind was equable. The pines murmured contentedly amid their polished needles, and the palmettos rattled their immense leaves as the wind swung them to and fro.

Mocking bird and jay were in the scrub thickets of Loon Beach, rejoicing musically over the unusual mildness of the season.

The sea islanders reveled in the prolonged beauty of the Indian summer. Houses were thrown open, and people lived mostly in their broad halls and piazzas.

They sallied forth on the morning of the day for the picnic in carriages and on horseback. At the various landing places, boats rowed by dusky oarsmen bore them across the sound to Loon Beach. Besides these, many went entirely by water in their own sailing craft.

Jacob Ehrich carried his mother, Sid and himself on board the Sylph. At the landing near the picnic ground, as the Sylph luffed, preparatory to casting anchor, a long canoe, clumsily rowed by negroes, forged athwart her bow. A collision seemed imminent. Jacob seized a pole and pushed the Sylph sharply back. As he did so, the canoe glided under his boom. The first face visible from beneath the Sylph's swinging sail was that of Squire Roanoak. It was red with sudden choler.

"Have a care, sir!" called the squire. "Can you not see where you are going?"

"Why, father," interposed Paul, "this is the Sylph—Jacob Ehrich's boat."

"Excuse me, my lad. I am getting more near-

sighted than ever. Delighted to meet you and yours."

"My sail prevented my seeing you in time, sir," said Jacob, touching his hat to Aunt Europa.

In a few minutes, every one was safely on shore. The grounds were now dotted with cheerful and chattering groups. Jacob found that not only himself, but his mother, were received with a studied consideration that was peculiarly gratifying under the circumstances.

Sea islanders seldom do things by halves. The transactions between Jacob and the Roanoaks had been noised about. The chivalry of the proceedings was not lost sight of among such a people.

Squire Roanoak constituted himself the special escort of the widow, whose scruples at attending such an affair were only set aside at Jacob's earnest entreaty.

"This is not an ordinary frolic," he said to her. "It signifies to us that we are socially all right now. I think even father would approve, if he could let us know."

Of course, the mother yielded. Sid found ample amusement among the men and boys who manipulated the cast-nets and caught the fish that were to be fried. There were strolls along the beach by many, and, later on, a dinner that would have tempted an anchorite. By twos and fours, by families and otherwise, the picnickers sat about on the clean white sand and ate and ate and ate.

Palmetto leaves served for cushions and tables. Over their heads was a canopy of waving palms and the sweep of hungry gulls. These last kept up wild, shrill pipings as they cut the sunshine in swift dartings hither and thither.

After dinner, there were more social diversions. Shells, sea-beans and toadfish were searched for; old men talked politics and crops; young men and boys, young women and girls, amused themselves as such people are apt to do anywhere under similar circumstances.

After a short time a boat-race was determin-

ed on, and the more speedy craft, with their white sails spread, were already bowing at their anchors, or standing off and on not far from the shore of the sound, like migratory birds trying their wings before the final flight.

The inner beach swept like a snowy half-moon along the concave landward shore of Loon Beach. Across this silvery crescent of water, the Sylph, with Jacob Ehrich, Sona Legare and Aunt Europa on board, bowled easily along, her mainsheet half slack and her huge sail quivering at the leach. She was waiting for the fleet of sloops, cat-rigs and schooners to all get under way.

Two hundred people from the shore were looking on. The contending boats were to sail through the inlet and out over the bar, then up the coast to the upper inlet, thence down the sound to the starting point, a distance all around of eight or nine miles.

The vessels fluttered into line, a dozen or more in number. They were manned by swarthy, dark-eyed young men and boys, active and vigorous as their Huguenot ancestors who settled the Carolina coast.

Certain young ladies, warmly wrapped, cuddled themselves well to windward on some of the racers, and uttered little screams of fear as the gunwales dipped or the wind-whipped scud flew over the bows.

One after another each boat got off. On shore a committee of elderly men, with watches out, took the starting time of each one separately. Soon a string of white sails was skimming the channel leading between the mangrove islands and Loon Beach, thence out at the inlet to the southern prong of the Beach.

Rounding that through a gentle dash of breakers, they met the firm swell of the open ocean, that caused some of the smallest craft to hesitate and turn back. Others held on until the coast was well behind, then grew timorous over a line of purplish haze that now marked the northern horizon. A few of the larger boats kept their course bravely. Among these was the Sylph.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FOG COMES DOWN—WHERE IS THE SYLPH?

The Sylph was well ahead and to windward of the others. She was carrying a single reef, and her mainsail was trimmed as taut and flat over the starboard gunwale as a board. The wind was hauling more eastward.

On shore the picnickers had mostly crossed over to the seaward side to view the prettiest part of the race—a snowy line of careening sails creeping over a gently heaving plain of blue.

"I am glad my daughter did not go," said one matron to another. "Is it not growing a little colder?"

The other agreed that it was, and both began looking for their wraps.

Some of the older men noticed that, though the sun shone with undiminished splendor, the mellow warmth of the air seemed to be congealing. The purple haze in the north was assuming an ashy hue. It hugged the ocean, dense and apparently motionless, yet drew undeniably nearer. A few sea gulls swept zig-zagging in from sea, uttering flute-like cries.

The remaining boats still held on stiffly. The Sylph was still clawing off shore as the wind kept veering more ahead. An old negro boatman, standing near where Paul Roanoak and Edgar Legare were watching the race, said to one of his mates:

- "Dey bettah 'gin ter reef, an' stan' in closter to sho'."
- "Why so?" asked Legare, quickly, who had overheard the remark.
- "Dey's a no'ther comin', sah. Marse Ehrich see dat, I reckon. So he holdin' de Sylph off, so he can make de upper inlet dedout tackin'. But, laws, marse! He don't seem ter know much 'bout dese yere coast fogs. Dey comes 'long

'bout time de no'ther strikes—den, whar is you? Dar you is, wropt up like a baby in a blankit, fo' you know what's de mattah. Dat ar Sylph, she bettah be huslin' in out'n dat, or suttin' gwine ter happen to her, sho'!"

"Why does Jacob stay out so far?" grumbled Edgar. "He knows he has ladies aboard."

"Perhaps he doesn't realize any danger," answered Paul. "As Cuff says, he may not understand our coast fogs yet."

Uncle Dick Legare and the squire now came up. Both were growing anxious.

"I will take Cuff, and run up to the bite just above here," said Paul. "There is an old lifeboat there in the station. I think the guard has gone to town to spend Thanksgiving. You know the regular crew doesn't go on duty until the first of December."

"No, you shall not," objected Squire Roanoak, quickly. "You could never overhaul them with the start they have got, and you might be in danger yourselves."

A general move, however, was made on the

part of many men to go to the upper inlet, where they could watch the boats come in. Paul and Edgar, avoiding their parents, hurried away, and soon reached the deserted life-station.

While no clouds were yet distinctly visible, a silvery film was being woven about the sun. The chill in the air increased. The ocean blue took on a steely glitter, and the cabbage-palms shivered sharply as they turned their under sides to the wind.

At the upper inlet a broad ship channel swept by, with a touch of breakers on the bar. An inward-bound steamer, one of the ocean-tramp ships, was in the offing.

While Edgar and Paul were at the deserted life-station, Cuff and one of his mates came along.

"Hurrah, Cuff!" cried Paul. "Let us launch the life-boat. When the norther strikes there may be a capsize. The Sylph is so far out she might swamp before she could reach shore."

But while Paul was speaking, Cuff shook his head and pointed to the north.

The boats, now alarmed, were making in towards the upper inlet. But the Sylph, quite a mile or more away, was the last to try to turn.

Then suddenly, yet almost impalpably, the face of the ocean was blotted out. The racing boats disappeared as if by magic, and, with a wild howl of the rising wind, the dreaded norther swept down upon Loon Beach in all its irresistible fury.

It was impossible to launch a life-boat with the lack of appliances, and in the face of the tremendous surf that almost immediately began to thunder along the beach. Crowds of anxious people hurried forward to the inlet to watch for the incoming boats.

"Look! there comes the Snipe! She is rounding the spit."

A low, dark, schooner-rigged craft swept into view like a race-horse, leaving a seething trail of brine behind. Her mainsail was down and her fore-peak halyards slacked, until the foresail hung loose.

Another boat materialized, dim and ghostly,

through the fog. Then a third and a fourth struggled safely round the spit, their peaks lowered, sheets held in hand, and their occupants wet, draggled and pale.

But where was the Sylph?

Uncle Dick Legare and the widowed mother of Jacob, together with Squire Roanoak, had hurried forward, notwithstanding the distance, and now stood gazing with haggard faces into the blinding mist and the driving gale.

As the occupants of the boats that had arrived came ashore they were anxiously questioned. When seen by them the Sylph was still a mile further to seaward and ahead of the craft nearest to her.

Jacob, evidently realizing his peril at last, had luffed, and was bearing towards the inlet. Then the wind and fog had closed in, and nothing more had been seen of the Sylph.

It was growing late. The norther, now in full force, lashed the outer bar with increasing surges. Surely no small boat could live long

while exposed to that immeasurable whirl of merciless breakers.

At last the fog began to grow thinner. Many tear-softened eyes strove to penetrate the dwindling gray spaces, as parents, relatives and friends peered and strained their sight.

"There!" "What is that?" "Can it be they?" "No." "Yes!" "Alas!" "What a disappointment!"

The flap of a gull's wing, the crest of a distant wave—fond illusions of dread-burdened hearts—that was all.

The Sylph had disappeared.

Night was approaching. Women and children must be gotten home. Both Squire Roanoak and Uncle Dick Legare announced their purpose of remaining on the beach. Mrs. Ehrich, prostrated with grief and suspense, was carried to the boats. Paul and Edgar, together with a strong party of volunteers, were to patrol the beach and try to launch the life-boat at the station should anything be seen.

Fires were lighted along Loon Beach—not

that much good was expected therefrom, but that no essential precaution might be neglected.

All night the fierce norther raged. Upon its wings came cold and sleet. All night long the squire and Uncle Dick paced a weary round of the gray, wet sand.

In the early morning there came a cry along the beach.

The mast of the Sylph, broken short off at the deck and with the boom and sundry shreds of rigging attached, had been washed ashore. Shortly thereafter a boat, manned by four negroes, rowed across the inlet from Mullet Beach, dragging a floating wreck.

It was the hull of the Sylph, the thwarts gone and the stern crushed in like an egg-shell. The negroes had found it lodged at the extremity of a sand-spit, somewhat to the southwest of the lower inlet.

"My poor sister!" ejaculated the squire, at this last proof of the awful probabilities indicated by this harrowing discovery. Uncle Dick sat on the sand, with his gray head buried on his knees; Paul and Edgar paced the beach like men half-crazed and gazed on the white yeast of waters and the close, dim horizon with aching eyes.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WRECK OF THE SYLPH—DISAPPOINTMENT—
THE LIGHTSHIP.

When the norther struck the Sylph Jacob was greatly alarmed. Its advance, though plain enough to practiced eyes, was concealed from him by the silent, swift, yet stealthy development of the fog, behind which the gale masked itself.

"Something is going to happen," said Sona, gazing into the mist. "Perhaps we had better have turned toward shore sooner."

Jacob was luffing, preparatory to coming about. The shore was already becoming invisible. Nearly a mile further out, on the edge of deep sea water, could be discerned the dim out-

line of a lightship. Five minutes later, even she could not be seen, so thick was the fog.

When the first fearful blast struck them, Miss Europa gave a scream, and throwing herself in the bottom of the boat, lay there like one bereft of sense.

Jacob was lowering the sail. As he stood on the very nose of the craft, halyards in hand, the seas swept over his feet. Sona pulled in on the main sheet. Jacob hurried back to relieve the bow of his weight, and, as the Sylph fell off sideways, she shipped a small sea over the forward washboard that sent a barrel of water aboard.

Aunt Europa shrieked again. Sona helped Jacob to lash the sail, which was whipping madly along the boom. The wind howled, and the Sylph was pitching terribly. Even then, the two brave young hearts were realizing that their chance for safety was growing fearfully small.

When the sea should rise to its full height, what chance would the Sylph have, in its vast

and foaming hollows? Already the mast was being almost jerked out of her.

Jacob strove with an oar to get her head to leeward, but she pounded along sideways, shipping water faster than Sona could bail it out. Aunt Europa roused sufficiently to assist her with a tin basin. Jacob worked his oar, but to little purpose.

As the general trend of the coast was east-northeast, the Sylph was now being driven farther out to sea in her southerly drift. At last, a larger wave than usual broke over her quarter, drenching the occupants and rendering Aunt Europa again helpless with fear.

Another sound came to their ears through the wild shriek of the gale; then the dark outline of an incoming steamship grew into vague distinctness about two cables' length to windward.

The three drenched and fear-stricken people screamed and waved their arms. But human cries went only a little way in that mad roar and boom of wind and surge.

At last Sona desisted, panting for breath, and

clung to the gunwale of the Sylph as the great shadowy steamship vanished. Jacob sank down discouraged. Aunt Europa seemed to have fainted.

"Must we give up?" asked the boy, finding resignation more difficult than even hopeless struggling.

Another sea that washed a torrent of water over the side was the significant reply. The mast snapped short off, carrying with it the sail.

Jacob cut away the bumping, clinging mass with his boat hatchet, and the Sylph floated, a third full of water and totally helpless.

About this time a hoarse, resonant sound arose, seemingly ahead. Then a faint yellow circle appeared on the face of the fog, that cleared and concentrated as the Sylph drifted on. All were startled for an instant by the unearthly sound and sight.

"The lightship!" suddenly cried Jacob. "It is their fog-horn. We are dead to windward, too. Rouse up, Miss Sona. You too, Miss Eu-

ropa. If we all shout, they may hear us. There—don't you see her hull looming up?"

All three shouted with a vigor born of desperation. Even Aunt Europa came out of her faint and screamed like a wild Indian.

A vast dun hulk, that rose and fell in gigantic undulations, heaved itself into view through the fog. High above was the light. From the huge shadow another mighty volume of sound clanged forth, and, as it ceased, the three shouted again with all their might.

"They see us!" cried Sona. "A man on the bridge is pointing. We will pass very close. Oh, Jacob—"

Her voice ran off into an hysterical quaver. The boy saw figures running to and fro dimly. He waved his hands. The Sylph drifted so close under the lightship's stern that Jacob feared they would be dashed to pieces against that great hull.

There came a hail, then a circling coil of rope shot from the vessel's deck, that Jacob and Sona threw themselves upon and clutched as drowning people grasp at a spar. Jacob took a turn around the stump of the mast, while a voice from the lightship shouted:

"Keep off! We will let you drift to leeward, then haul you in."

This was done. The little Sylph forged past the towering hulk that swayed slowly as the small fabric of the wrecked boat was tossed up and down—one instant almost on a level with the lightship's deck, then down, down into a sea trough so deep that Sona would close her eyes in dread of the breaking white wall of waters that threatened to engulf them at every plunge.

But at last the rope was being hauled in, and the Sylph was towed slowly under the lee of the lightship's hull. There she rose and fell more easily, while a sling, rigged at the end of a powerful spar—used in shipping provisions from the supply steamer at sea—was thrust out over the ship's side, then lowered through blocks above.

"Hold fast!" shouted some one on deck.

"Sing out when you are ready for us to hoist. One at a time—mind."

With some difficulty Jacob fastened Aunt Europa into the sling. She shrieked as she felt herself hoisted high over the swirl of waters.

The next instant she was on deck, surrounded by several sailors and an officer or two. She was released and assisted to the cabin below.

Sona's turn came next, then Jacob's.

As the young fellow swung clear of the Sylph, he could not help feeling a pang of regret as all that was left of his much-prized boat floated off and disappeared in the fog. Half an hour later, the whole party, much revived by warmth and good cheer, were able to think about the distress that their unknown fate would occasion to friends and relatives ashore.

On being questioned, the captain of the lightship said that it would be impossible to communicate with the shore until the wind abated.

"Our small boat would hardly live in such a sea," he said. "From what the barometer indicates, though, we may have a shift of wind by

morning. Then, perhaps, we can do something."

With this they had to remain satisfied.

"After all," remarked Sona, who was always inclined to take a cheery view of things, "this is much better than the Sylph—isn't it, Jacob?"

Jacob confessed that it was, but Aunt Europa only sighed in a dismal way. Her nervous system had received too great a shock to readjust itself at once.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

Coffee was made by the fires on Loon Beach. The wind had shifted eastward, and was much more moderate, though a cold, gray density of atmosphere hung over the ocean, obscuring the view on every side. This change of wind in the night had doubtless caused the wreck of the Sylph to come ashore, and thus intensify the distress of the waiting ones on the beach.

The squire and Uncle Dick, having at last fallen into a drowse on some blankets spread on the sand, they were not awakened until the coffee was ready.

Even so early as then, a boat came over from Edisto. It bore Mrs. Ehrich and Master Sid.

"I simply could not stay away," said the widow, whose tear-stained face and haggard looks bore testimony to the fact of a sleepless night.

Even Sid appeared vaguely uneasy. He was surprised at himself for liking Jacob so well. They were made to take coffee with the rest. But it was a cheerless, gloomy gathering.

"Has anything been seen or heard?" faltered Mrs. Ehrich, at length, for she dreaded to hear the almost inevitable answer.

But before Uncle Dick Legare could break the news of the finding of the Sylph, there came a cry from a watching group on the sand-dunes overlooking the beach.

Then Paul Roanoak came running.

"A boat!" he shouted. "There's a boat coming in from the direction of the lightship!"

They looked at each other with pallid, expectant faces. Then Squire Roanoak shook his head.

"We may as well be ready for the worst,"

said he. "There is not one chance in a hundred of a rescue, I fear."

The group on the sand-hills now began to shout and gesticulate. Then Edgar Legare came flying to his father. He was pale almost to a death-like hue.

"It may be them!" he exclaimed. "I am not sure—yet it looks as if there were women on board."

At that everybody started to climb the sanddunes toward the sea. Mrs. Ehrich's limbs trembled. She held tight to the hand of her son.

"Help me along, Sidney," she gasped.
"Don't leave your mother behind."

Before they reached the summit of the sandhills the group on top gave a great shout. Numbers of them disappeared, running in the direction of the breakers.

When the squire, Uncle Dick and Mrs. Ehrich at last reached a point that gave them a view of the surf and the beach, many of their friends were rushing into the surf and pushing

shoreward a boat containing several people.

"Jacob!" cried the mother, not at once distinguishing her son among the crowd of men.
"My Jacob! Where is he?"

Amid the wash of the breakers Jacob heard that loving cry, as he was borne ashore on the shoulders of two brawny negroes. He struggled to the beach and hurried up the sand-hills. Then his mother threw up her arms, ran a few steps, and fell upon her son's neck.

"Jacob," she murmured, brokenly, "I should have died, too, if you had not come back."

Sid, now that Jacob was seen to be safe, looked rather disgusted over the general "to-do" that was going on over the returned voyagers.

"This makes me tired!" he declared, at length. "Are you all crazy? I'm going to get out until it is over."

"You young rascal!" said the squire, shaking his finger playfully at Jacob, after he had embraced his sister. "What a night you have given us all!"

As for Uncle Dick, he was so overjoyed at possessing Sona again, that he hugged all the rescued ones in a comically impartial way, and wound up by cutting an old-fashioned pigeonwing on the beach sand, while his eyes were filled with grateful tears.

There was a half hour of inquiries and mutual explanations, then the lightship people were rewarded, not only with thanks, but with a substantial gift of hard dollars on the part of Mrs. Ehrich, the squire and Uncle Dick. Paul and Edgar also insisted upon "chipping in," as they termed it, liberally.

"Now, I have a suggestion to make," said Squire Roanoak to his neighbors and friends generally. "That is for all of you to go back with Europa, Paul and myself, and take potluck in a dinner, that shall evince in some small way, how thankful I feel for what has occurred this morning. What say, friends?"

This proposal was generally agreed to, and presently a number of boats were bearing the party across the sound to Roanoak Hall.

In conclusion, it may be stated that matters between the Ehrichs and the Roanoaks moved on smoothly after this. Also other families, on Edisto and Johns Islands, were led to consider the friendship of these newcomers as less objectionable than they formerly thought it would be.

The phosphate works under the new management of Ehrich & Co. prospered even more than when Mr. Ehrich was at the helm of affairs. Paul developed a good business faculty, while Jacob proved to be a phenomenal expert in the art of drumming up new markets for their commercial fertilizers.

In fact, it was not very long before the two young men found that their surplus cash derived from the works could be used to good advantage in improving the squire's two plantations of Waccamaw and Bugle Point. The old gentleman finally turned over all active management of his farms to Paul and Jacob, and rejoiced at his own leisure and freedom from worry and work.

Even Aunt Europa came to think that this union of blue blood and commercial plebeianism was not without solidly satisfactory results.

As for Sona—well, whatever Paul and Jacob saw fit to do was apt to be all right with Sona. Even Sid was pleased to say that Sona was "such a downright good fellow that it was a pity she was not a boy."

And Sid's opinion of girls—as girls—was usually the reverse of complimentary.

As for the Sylph—her memory was honored in a swifter, finer and larger namesake, that won first prize at the race which came off at the Thanksgiving Day picnic next following the one we have described.

Jacob wanted to name the new boat "The Sona," but Sona wouldn't have it.

"The Sylph is good enough for any boat," she said.

And "Sylph" it remained.

THE END.

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